

EDWARD KLOTH

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is the 5th of November 2008. We have just seen the election of Barack Obama and this is an interview with Edward Kloth. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. You go by Ted, is that right?

KLOTH: Correct.

Q: Okay Ted, let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

KLOTH: I was born on January 21, 1947 in Cherry Point, North Carolina, at the Marine Air Base.

Q: Let's go over on your father's side first. What do you know about the Kloth family, where do they come from?

KLOTH: Okay, well, the Kloth side of the house is of German ancestry. My mother was born and raised in Buffalo, New York. Her side of the family immigrated from England in the 18th and 19th centuries. A number had come via Canada.

My father was a psychiatrist, born and raised in Brooklyn. He lived almost all his life around New York City. He went to Columbia University and Columbia's medical school, graduating in the spring of 1941. He joined the Navy and was on two small aircraft carriers in the Pacific, the Marcus Islands and the Belleau Wood. He was in a number of key battles including, I believe, Guadalcanal and Leyte Gulf.

Q: Was he one of the "Taffies" at Leyte?



KLOTH: Yes, his carrier was bracketed by gunfire from a Japanese battleship, one in front and one behind, the third on target never came.

Q: Did you ever read the book *The Last Charge of the Tin Can Sailors*? It's a wonderful book. It talks about the destroyers and the jeep carriers.

KLOTH: Well, I gather that the key to the action was that, while the major American fleet had gone north looking for the Japanese fleet, a smaller force, the largest ship may have been a cruiser, was left behind to cover the landings. When the Japanese fleet suddenly appeared, the admiral ordered his ships to turn and head toward the more powerful Japanese force. He also ordered the aircraft to attack with, in some cases, just machine guns, of no use against battleships and cruisers. The Japanese admiral then assumed that there must be a large American force just over the horizon and withdrew.

There is a point here that I would like to make too because I later spent so much time in Korea and Japan. My father had been there, so I was aware of the Pacific as a kid. My father always emphasized that things like atrocities or some of the ferocious behavior of the Japanese, including suicide before surrender, had to be understood first and foremost as a result of what war does to people who fight it. He reminded me that Americans too could be brutal under wartime conditions.

Q: The Belleau Wood took some hits didn't it?

KLOTH: He had two very close calls when kamikazes attacked his ship. He also visited Japan shortly after the surrender; his carrier was sent to Tokyo Bay after the surrender. He went on shore at least twice, Tokyo and Yokosuka. One of the things that he emphasized was that when the Navy took them ashore to Tokyo, he and his shipmates were, of course, worried about security. He had seen sailors killed by kamikazes. He'd been ashore and seen the Marines who had been in ferocious action on Guadalcanal. He'd seen Japanese soldiers who'd killed themselves rather than surrender. In Tokyo, however, he found the Japanese very polite and friendly.

The other point he made was his impression that the U.S. military authorities did not bring the GIs ashore with gloating in mind or "this is what we do to people who cross us," but rather in the spirit of: we had to do this terrible thing or this might have happened to our cities. You'll recall the pictures of Tokyo after the fire bomb raids. It was flattened. The atomic bombs were a terrible weapon, so much destruction from one bomb, but the death and destruction from the fire bomb raids was horrendous. When I served at our consulate in Fukuoka in the mid-eighties, I met older Japanese who still couldn't forget the terror of the bombing of that city.



Q: It's interesting as one looks at this. I am old enough to remember this, although I was a kid but I grew up in Annapolis. Very quickly there wasn't the hatred of the Japanese. The British carried it much longer than the Americans did because we didn't lose an empire and, while we had the Bataan death march and all that, we still didn't have the huge humiliation of Singapore and all that came afterwards.

KLOTH: Right, I think the Australians of that generation too, particularly those who fought in places like the jungles in New Guinea, had feelings that remained very strong.

Q: I know I occupied Japan for a very short time, and then all of a sudden I was protecting Japan. They signed a peace treaty.

Where did your father meet your mother?

KLOTH: I'm not sure exactly but some time during the war.

Q: Did your mother graduate from college?

KLOTH: After they were married, Dad went to sea, and she did her BA at Barnard College in New York.

Q: And your father when he came back from the war was he a doctor at that time?

KLOTH: Yes, he decided to specialize in psychiatry.

Q: Do you have brothers or sisters?

KLOTH: I have a sister and a brother. My sister's married to a doctor. They lived most of their lives up in Maine and are now in eastern Maryland. My brother graduated from the Naval Academy in '75, served five years in the Navy, and then joined Merrill Lynch. He now runs Merrill Lynch operation up in Grand Rapids.

Q: Let's talk a little about growing up with a psychiatrist as a father. I mean would he sit at the table and say I know why you did that or something like that?



KLOTH: No, not at all. Actually growing up sort of prepared me for living with classified information in government. In a doctor's family, it was a very, very hard rule that you don't talk about patients at home. Occasionally, he would mention some incident, but not in any way you could identify a patient. There was no sense, I think, that any of us had growing up that we were continually on the couch.

Let me mention too though before we move on that my maternal grandmother actually also had a significant impact on my interest in foreign affairs. She and my grandfather split up in the '30s, and during World War II she volunteered as a nurse's aid for the Red Cross in the South Pacific; in fact, she and my father met on Guadalcanal. When the war was over, she went back to the South Pacific and spent years traveling around. She went around on freighters; at that time freighters would take passengers. She also moved around on an inter-island sailing schooner.

Q: Quite a life.

KLOTH: ...and doing pen and ink drawings. She wound up in the early '50s in a place called Umbala, at least that is what I remember it as, India, at a missionary leprosy hospital, and stayed there for some years. As a kid at Christmas, we would get boxes from India with all kinds of neat things with wonderful smells from the wood: writing boxes with doors and the little shelves beautifully carved with trees.

Q: Often sandalwood.

KLOTH: There would be little peas with fifty hand carved ivory elephants in it; things like that. But the wood smell stands out most.

Q: Even as you talk I can think of particularly the sandalwood but other types of wood smells.

KLOTH: Nana came back in the late '50s, as she said once "die." She wasn't in ill health, but she just felt that the stress of living abroad in the manner in which she was...she traveled all over India where she would put on a sari and Indian garb and travel around third class on trains. She delighted in telling me how she would eat little things that the street vendors were selling, etc.



I was interested in the Far East, rather than India, for some reason. My junior year in college I decided I'd see how I liked living abroad. We didn't have all the study abroad programs then, so between my junior and senior years, I went to Mexico and built outhouses with a college group in a very poor brick-making area of Mexico City. I figured if I didn't like living there, I won't like countries as different as those of Asia. We lived with middle class families, so it was not that much of a hardship, but the people in the area where we worked certainly had it tough.

Before I left, I remember my father saying, "You've heard Nana's stories about eating little this and that from the street vendors, etc., but I also remember the story of her having to go up to the hill station for six months to recover from this or that that she contracted."

I've followed his advice ever since and enjoyed living and eating abroad. "It isn't hard. Be smart about what you put in your mouth. Most stuff, if you cook it, it may go right through you, but it won't stay with you."

Q: Well again were you much of a reader? I'm thinking a Jack London book that probably would have grabbed you as *Tales in the South Pacific*.

KLOTH: I was a great reader of history, particularly U.S. history. My father's and grandmother's experiences peaked my interest in non-Western things too. I went to boarding school in Connecticut, Choate School. I was president of the current history club, and took the school's first non-Western history and civilization class. That really started my interest in the Far East.

Q: I want to go back to the elementary school and that time. Do you recall any books that particularly interested you or type of books or specific books as a kid?

KLOTH: I read *Treasure Island*, *Mutiny on the Bounty*, *Kon-Tiki*, *Seven Years in Tibet*, those kinds of books.

Q: Where did you grow up?

KLOTH: I grew up around Yonkers, New York, near New York City in the 1950s. It was a single-family residential neighborhood; houses in the '20s and '30s, I think. I walked to primary school because it was close.

Q: What was the neighborhood like? Was it middle class or...?



KLOTH: Most of the people were professionals or business people.

Q: How about being a boy in the area? What did you do?

KLOTH: Played with friends in the afternoon and ran around. We'd come home from school. Up through sixth grade I don't recall much homework at PS (Public School) 8. I was a Cub Scout and then Boy Scout.

Q: It's somewhat different today where the children are terribly organized. I mean I grew up, and we were sort of feral. Your mother would say, "Get out of the house."

KLOTH: Same experience. We got out of the house until Mom rang a big brass bell at 5:30 for dinner, and we were there quick. Living near New York, our parents were concerned about safety, but in our neighborhood we could run around. The rule of thumb was that it was OK as long as you were close enough to hear the dinner bell.

One friend got into theater at school. He was a couple of grades ahead, and would write scripts and record musical backgrounds for a little puppet theater we started together. His father was the minister at our church, and my friend would borrow the church tape recorder. I joined as his apprentice, and we'd put on puppet shows for the kids in the neighborhood. I guess that was fifth or sixth grade. But when I got to junior high myself, I was more interested in current affairs than theater.

Q: What was your elementary school like?

KLOTH: Public School # 8 was full of us baby boomer kids. Yonkers was struggling to keep up with the influx. We had thirty and forty in a class. Too big, everyone said.

Q: Was there much in the way of diversity? Were the kids pretty much white, middle-class?

KLOTH: Yeah, they were white, and a mix of working and middle-class kids.

Q: Was there any sort of division in the Catholic, Jews and non-Catholics, non-Jews or not?



KLOTH: I think people were certainly conscious and aware of that, but for us kids, I don't recall any jibes in school. Growing up around New York you knew a mix of people. When I finished sixth grade and would have gone to a consolidated junior high school, my parents had some concerns about safety in the new school which included some rougher areas of town. They were also concerned about quality of education. My parents send me to a private school in New York City, so I took a school bus back and forth.

Q: What was the private school like?

KLOTH: It was Riverdale Country Day School. They had a few boarders but mostly not. So there in terms of the mix, the mix was more New York City in terms of the ethnic backgrounds, including some children of UN officials, so we had some "foreign" students. Most students lived in New York City, so my guess was in terms of income level many were from higher levels than the kids where I was. I kept up with some of my PS 8 friends. The work was a lot harder at Riverdale both because of the jump to middle school but also because the private schools loaded on more homework. I got a bus around 7:15 or so as I recall, went to school, got home perhaps between 4:30 and 5:00pm, ate and started homework turning in around 9:30.

Q: Well, we are sort of up through junior high were you able to partake in the richness of New York City?

KLOTH: In grade school, my parents often took us into the museums in New York. The Museum of Natural History and the Cloisters were my favorites. But from eighth grade, my parents started lengthening the leash. The really big deal was being allowed to go into the city by train with a friend and no adult escort in eighth grade on a Saturday afternoon; that was a big deal. We had to be on the train back by 5pm, of course. The first time I sat through the overseas security briefing, I realized I heard it first from my parents before I went in "the city," - "don't flash your money around; know where you're going; don't look lost, even if you are; don't walk away from your backpack or it will disappear; be aware of what's happening around you!"

At Riverdale we often had ambassadors, judges and professors come and speak. Eleanor Roosevelt talked to our assembly once.

Q: How about at this country day school what sort of subjects turned you on and what subjects turned you off?

KLOTH: History was the one that interested me most, although I did well in biology and English. My math was okay, but history was what I enjoyed.



Q: What sort of history were you getting?

KLOTH: Well, standard fare for the times, the fifties, - U.S. and European; that was really it. We had a geography course, and that was apparently to give us a more global perspective. I don't recall any non-European or even Latin American history. I think that was a sign of the times.

Q: At that period did you get any feel for the Cold War?

KLOTH: Yes, we all knew it was there. I remember in PS 8 we would have air raid drills and duck under the desk or go out in the hall. I was on the safety patrol, so we were part of the enforcer don't run down the stairs during fire drills; don't talk during air raid drills. But I don't recall living under any particular dread of being nuked; I mean when we had a fire drill, we went to the playground and counted off. Air raid drill meant under the desk or into the hall. As I remember, we'd try to guess from the teacher's behavior on a given day which it would be. In the winter, for example, teacher's coat on the bookshelf meant fire drill, because we'd be going outside.

Q: Was TV very important?

KLOTH: We had a TV from when I was four or five, I suppose. We had designated TV time. From junior high not much weekday TV allowed, though. With what was on in the '50s, our parents weren't concerned about R ratings.

Q: How about movies? Were you much of a movie fan?

KLOTH: Well, in elementary school there was the Saturday matinee and we went maybe every two or three months. It was a treat.

Q: By the way, politically where did your family fall?

KLOTH: They were Eisenhower Republicans; but they were not politically active.

Q: And religiously?

KLOTH: Protestant, we went to church regularly, but our family was not deeply religious.



Q: You were at Choate from when to when?

KLOTH: I was there from '61 to '64.

Q: Well let's talk a bit about prep school. I'm a prep school alumnus I went to Kent. We used to play Choate. What was Choate like in your time?

KLOTH: Well, it had moved away from the pre-World War II formality but was still coats and ties for classes. Smoking was absolutely forbidden. First of all, so that a dorm and its occupants wouldn't get torched. No "butt room" either where students could light up. The headmaster thought them unsightly. Don't recall anyone saying the issue was health related, although by the early Sixties the tobacco companies were under fire. Coming from Riverdale I didn't find the work harder; it was the same. The student body at Choate was probably more white Protestant than at Riverdale with its location in New York. I did have the impression when I arrived at Choate, however, that the school was making an effort to recruit a more diverse student body, but at a New England prep school in the early Sixties that could mean getting a student from Denver as much as anything else.

Every student at Choate had to do work crew. My first semester I was on the dishwashing crew. As the new guy I had to carry twelve plates hot and damp from the dish dryer, and put them on the storage shelves. We wore gloves and an apron, but one or two stacks, and you were wet, and your fingers raw.

Rank hath its privilege, though. The next year my duties were lighter. Put the by then room-temperature stacks in a cart, and roll them out to the tables. Work at your own pace. Of course, the faster you went, the sooner you finished. Senior year it was mail room clerk.

Q: I know we did the same thing. How about your courses? Did you continue with the love of history and all?

KLOTH: I liked history very much. For my extracurricular I did current history club and debating. We had speakers come for the history club. Choate's an hour and a half by train from New York, so we'd get people from the UN or politicians. Supreme Court Justice William Douglas came. If we didn't have a speaker, we would get together and discuss a topic in the newspapers. The faculty advisor was an English teacher. He decided that because the only history offered was U.S. and European, he'd offer a course in non-Western history in my senior year. We did Latin America, Africa, the Indian sub-continent and the Far East. That's when I really got interested in East Asia.



Q: Did the Cuban missile crisis hit you all?

KLOTH: Well, very much in terms of the drama of it. John Kennedy had gone to Choate, so there was a special affinity at the school when he came in, though I guess many alumni had probably voted Republican. I think the headmaster and faculty probably thought we were going to war. I remember that at one point President Kennedy had addressed or was about to address the nation. Our headmaster's talk to us at chapel, where we had "assembly" every night, that night certainly had a tone to it I'll never forget. He knew people who'd been sitting before him not too many years before who were in the service. He was probably concerned too about nuclear war. The atmosphere was pretty electric.

Q: Also the assassination of the present Kennedy being a Choate boy, too.

KLOTH: That was also very dramatic. I remember watching TV between classes, never mind whether you were at Choate or wherever you were watching that on TV was pretty dramatic and still sticks in my mind as it did with other people. Vietnam: we knew there was a war going on there, and it was starting to escalate. We'd read New York Times articles and talk about it. The debate, of course, in the U.S. was starting to heat up, although not to anything like the temperature it was going to have in the future.

Q: The Civil Rights movement was getting started particularly with the early arrival of Lyndon Johnson. Did that...?

KLOTH: That was also very much a part of the mix in terms of our education there. I remember some Yale students Yale who had worked in the South one summer came up and talked to us. They'd had some close calls but certainly not only Blacks but also the people who had gone down there to support the movement from places like Yale had been killed. It was hard to believe that was happening in America. We had only one black student and everyone knew there was plenty of discrimination in the north, but killing people for trying to vote. That seemed like something from another country. Choate arranged for a group of us to go to Wesleyan College to hear Dr. Martin Luther King speak. That was an experience not to be forgotten. He was amazing. The power of his ideas and his voice filled the room.

Q: When you graduated in 1964, were you pointed toward any college, university at all?



KLOTH: Kids tend to look at schools in their region. My sister went to high school in New Hampshire and went to University of New Hampshire. At a school like Choate, you look at the standard Ivy League or East coast schools. I went to Dartmouth College for some reason three or four of us from Choate went to Dartmouth that year, Ivy League but a bit off the beaten track for Choate. I guess because most of my classmates felt three or four years of life at Choate had been their years in the wilderness, and they wanted the bright lights of a more urban school.

Q: What brought you to Dartmouth.

KLOTH: I spent the summers in New Hampshire. My first job was a hotel bell hop on Little Lake Sunapee. It's a beautiful state. My guidance counselor at Choate too at one point said to me, - I was looking at Harvard and Dartmouth and Columbia, "I can say different things about each of the schools, but the bottom line is that in college you have a chance to live wherever you like. You probably won't have that chance later in life."

I assumed I'd be living in a city like New York or Boston the rest of my life, and Hanover is a beautiful place, so I decided to apply early decision and got in. Great to know in December where you're going. I enjoyed and probably learned more my senior year than my classmates who had to sweat it out until April.

Q: All right, let's talk about Dartmouth. What was it like when you got there? What kind of a school was it?

KLOTH: Well, I was there from '64-'68. Dartmouth was unisex, like so many other schools. Dartmouth was in a sense sort of like Choate; it was bigger; the work was a notch harder, I think. We had some minorities, but not that many. Very few Black students, some Asian-American guys. In fact, when I was there it was a big deal that one of the fraternities pledged a Black student because it was said to be one whose national organization was very Southern oriented.

Q: Was there a bias or a thrust of the school toward maybe one party, what was it liberal or conservative, or how would you put it?

KLOTH: I would guess it was on the conservative side, say compared to Columbia.

Q: Columbia was going through the...

KLOTH: Well, by '68, there was a change in the college community at large.



Q: At Dartmouth how did you find the social life there?

KLOTH: By junior year I wondered, "What was I thinking coming to an all male school up in New Hampshire."

I think Dartmouth going coed was very good in terms of giving it a more holistic experience; the society was changing, but at the time I came to feel we were behind the curve because the school was so isolated up in the woods. In retrospect, I'm glad I went there, but I and others couldn't help but feel out of it. The issue wasn't just co-education but America seemed to be changing and Hanover seemed rather far from those changes.

Q: How about courses there? Did any stick out in your mind?

KLOTH: By that time I was really interested in Asian history. We only had three East Asian history courses, pre-modern, modern and the seminar, so I took all of those and Chinese philosophy as well as Middle Eastern history and Latin American history. I remember a U.S. economic history course that I've found useful over the years in helping me look at economic issues.

I hesitated to take Chinese because people said it took too much time from other courses to learn the ideographs. I intended to go to Hong Kong or Taiwan to work and study after graduation. (You couldn't go to mainland China then.) I wasn't a great student by any means. I was ready to really study only by my senior year, I think.

Q: Did the Foreign Service cross your radar at the time?

KLOTH: Yep, and, in fact, my senior year I took the test and just missed passing so that was off the scope. But to finish off my college experience, when I came back from living and working in Mexico the summer of '67, there were riots in American cities and cities burning and there you are with a Mexican family looking at the TV news. They'd ask me what was going on. All I could say was what the Newsweek was telling me, but I felt that I was really disconnected from my own country.

When I got back to college a friend of mine and I were having lunch one day, we both just jokingly said, "You know the winter is so grim here, and we are missing a lot that's happening, we ought to find a way to go live in the city for a while."



We wanted to do more than just spend a semester at a city school. There weren't internships then, so we were kind of groping. I was talking to another friend and said, "You know I have this idea, but I don't know what to do with it."

He had an answer, "Listen, my father is a minister out in LA, and his parish has some kind of relationship with an urban church, let me give him a call." The next day he came over and said, "Ted, call my father."

So I did, and he was really positive, "I just got off the phone with the minister I know. In the summers they have had seminarians at their little church, so they have some Head Start and other education programs you could work at and they have a place to put you up with the caretaker and her family. Would you be interested in coming out and working there?"

After we'd had a kind of telephone interview with the pastor, he invited us to come out for the winter trimester from January to March. So the punch line was we went in to the Dean. My friend had enough advanced credits when he entered Dartmouth, so he could graduate on time. I was short one course, so the Dean sent me over to the education Department, where I found the department head enthusiastic. He gave us required reading, and we wrote a paper for him and got full credit, so we both graduated with our class.

It turned out that our Dartmouth-South LA Project was the first internship of its kind at Dartmouth. Now students do such internships routinely but in 1968, there were foreign study but no "intern" programs. There was some talking going on among some of the faculty, but I give Dartmouth credit for letting us by the groundbreakers. I give our parents credit too. They gave us full support.

Off we went to LA, driving across the country. The area was Compton, bordering Watts. Compton had grown during World War II as a working class town, so from the freeway, it looked like a suburb with all these single-family houses. When you left the freeway, you knew, "Whoa, there is something else going on here, and some of it ain't good."

Parts of Compton were still working class Black, Hispanic and White. Then the area of the panhandle, between Watts and somewhere else was pretty tough. Many people in the area had low-income jobs but there was serious poverty, and some nasty types moving through too. Our host cautioned us to keep our eyes open. We had an incident I got mugged early on because I was careless for a moment but fortunately missed getting seriously hurt by a hair. We decided not to leave. Our mentor was great. "I'm sure you'll never let your guard down again. The up side is people will know you stayed anyway, and will appreciate that."



The people and kids we worked with were great. There was a lot of tension at the high school. That school twenty or thirty years before I think had been predominantly White, and now was Black and Hispanic. Many of the faculty and administration were White, and had started in the system when it was quite a different system. You know this is the Black Power time in '68, and there were a lot of things happening.

Q: Things are extremely confrontational with Black Power and that sort of thing.

KLOTH: Right, and our coming into the school...we didn't go into the high school right away because our mentor wanted to know us better and to let the community get to know us, so we started working with Head Start. We worked with kids who had severe learning disabilities, little kids, nursery and kindergarten kids in the early afternoons. Then we tutored elementary and junior high school students from 3:30 or so to around 5pm. After a month and a half, we started going to the high school, in the afternoons.

I realized when I got back to Dartmouth, I was ready to start studying in college; actually my last semester was my best academically.

Q: You are talking about confrontational. Did you sort of develop skills in not letting this turn into White guy versus Black guy type of thing?

KLOTH: We would wear coats and ties like the teachers did. I didn't have any confrontations directly, but as we talked to teachers about what was going on in the school, the stress lines were clear. It wasn't just problems between the faculty and the students or the predominantly White faculty and heavily Black student body, but within the groups. You had the people who were actively dealing drugs, and you had the people who were there to learn. This tension was real. You could see it was there.

Q: Did you get any feel for in the school almost a write off of a certain portion of the school student body and all, this sort of they are not going to make it and let's concentrate over here or what?



KLOTH: Well, clearly among the teachers there were different reactions, and it wasn't just an age thing. I had a great deal of respect for all the teachers and administrators of whatever race. A guard with a pistol was at the door as was a metal detector, Some students still got knives and guns and drugs in. Teachers were trying to work with their students. Only a few seemed to have given up. One of the best teachers was White and had worked in NY State prisons with all kinds of characters. He was terrific in figuring out what approach to take with each student as an individual. Another great teacher was Black. He had a terrific combination of no-nonsense but understanding teaching skills. Teachers felt that the principal hadn't figured out how to deal with the changes going on all around him. When I see the challenges in our area's schools today, I feel empathy for all involved. We really short change education.

Q: How did the Vietnam War play at Dartmouth?

KLOTH: Dartmouth was pretty isolated. We only really had a few, small demonstrations in '67-'68 that I recall. There was a lot of discussion, but again people there felt it was a very conservative place. Also, it was predominantly undergraduates, and only about 2,400 hundred of us. Certainly everybody was well aware of the draft. There were certainly students even from when I first got there who were going to graduate school not because they wanted to go to graduate school or Peace Corps but because they didn't want to go to Vietnam. Senator Eugene McCarthy's campaign mobilized some liberal students, but I was in LA then.

Q: Actually, when I graduated in 1950 and the Korean War started, so I just figured I might as well enlist.

KLOTH: Right. I had friends who were ROTC. There was a contingent at Dartmouth, but by '68 for graduation the activism level had increased to a level where the ROTC leaders were very worried. Some activists were talking about breaking up the commissioning ceremony. The New Hampshire State Police came in with police dogs. I had a friend who was an ROTC, and he said, "I hope they try."

Q: Oh boy.



KLOTH: So that stuff was there, but it wasn't like Columbia where the school was shut down. Our biggest flash was when Alabama Governor George Wallace came to school. That was probably winter, no it couldn't have been winter of '68 because I wasn't there; maybe it was spring of '68..., he was invited to speak. Discussion got hot before he came between those who said he had a right to speak and those who said there should be a protest to break up his speech. I thought students should go but not applaud. Wallace was clever and made some cracks about Harvard, and got predictable laughter which I thought was bad form from the student audience which was stonily silent for much of the rest of his remarks. Some students tried to rush the stage but were blocked by security, so Wallace got the TV news coverage of Ivy League "radicals" "attacking" him.

KLOTH: I would like to flip back to my high school as well as college experience and hit on a couple of things to finish off.

One was the importance of writing. I think at Choate and Dartmouth they really did a terrific job. In terms of my Foreign Service work, the best preparation was my junior year at Choate. Our English teacher had us write four two-page typewritten essays a week; maybe it was three. You could write on anything you wanted. You could even write poetry; I think if poetry you only needed a page. Having to write under the gun like that served me well when I got to the Foreign Service where you have to produce a cable or memo quickly.

Another was a U.S. history teacher who was very critical, this was in 1964, and he was no means a longhaired radical. He was the football coach and had very short hair. But he was very much an iconoclast, and a let's-take-another-look-at-history teacher. So that was, I thought, very liberating and had a staying effect.

I also credit Dartmouth too with trying to wrestle with the changes going on in the country. There was certainly over the course of my time there, a strong sense that the demographic makeup of the student body didn't reflect the country and that the college needed to reach out more.

KLOTH: As graduation approached, I looked around for a way to go to East Asia with something that I felt had some socially useful component to it. I was 4-F, so had a broader range of choices than others facing the draft. In 1968, there was no question of going to mainland China. I looked for but didn't find anything in Taiwan or Hong Kong. So a friend of mine also interested in China, found that Peace Corps was in Korea and Malaysia, and we both applied for Peace Corps there. I was offered Peace Corps in Korea. Training started in October. So during the summer I stayed in Hanover, N.H., working in the hospital as a janitor including cleaning out the operating room. I lived in a cabin with a buddy of mine in the woods. We had running water from a spring and 25 yards out back was the outhouse. Then I worked briefly for a congressional campaign.



I missed the McCarthy political campaign, because I was in LA, so I volunteered for this campaign. It was fascinating. The candidate was a Dartmouth College professor. I didn't know him before I started. I had no experience, so they gave me the most rural districts, the ones they didn't think counted, to go out and scout as an advance man.

One of the most touching experiences there was in one small town that was literally a general store; that was it. They had a small town hall, just two small rooms and a central lobby with a rotunda, say 20 feet high. All around the rotunda were the names of the men from that district who had gone to the Civil War. There were more men's names on that rotunda than there were people in the district in 1968.

Q: Those places really emptied out. I know my wife is kind of from a small village in the northeast kingdom of Vermont called Sheffield. We'd drive around there, and you'd see signs that would say here stood such and such a town or village, but their foundations were all overgrown.

KLOTH: Well, if you walk through the woods, you come across stonewalls with trees, not bushes, trees, growing in what we called cellar holes, which were houses. You look at the mill towns and the old textile mills put up in 1830 and 1840 along the river to take advantage of waterpower. People often forget that our society and economy have always been changing. After the Civil War many of those mill jobs were exported to the U.S. South. Farmers went west because those New England farms were tough to work.

Q: Well, what did you find? Did you come away with any experiences of talking to the people out there? How did you see them voting?

KLOTH: My job was to go in and do the initial assessment, gather information on voting patterns in a town. I usually talked to whoever was the local Democrat. This was New Hampshire, and I think up through the '90s, it was solidly Republican.

Q: The major NH paper was the Union Leader?

KLOTH: Manchester Union Leader, very conservative. William Lobe I think was the publisher and owner. It was a very, very conservative area. The classic Yankee's up in the hills and even in the small towns. Fiscally very conservative. There were areas that were quite poor; they depended heavily on the tourist business in the summer. I worked in one of these hotels as a bellhop and a dishwasher, then as a salad and sandwich guy, so I had a chance to know some of the folks better than I would have otherwise; certainly better than at Dartmouth where there wasn't that much contact. But I left in early October 1968. Our candidate lost, no surprise.



One of the lessons I learned there I think was useful over the years dealing with the press as a Foreign Service officer. Our press guy said to the candidate just before a media conference, "Two minute answers, no longer. If they want to more, they'll ask."

Q: Ted, in '68, of course, they had the riots in Chicago, they had the assassination of Kennedy...

KLOTH: Columbia, Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy.

Q: ...Robert Kennedy and all. Where sort of the youthful Ted where did you fit in this? How did you feel about all this?

KLOTH: Well, it was very frustrating. I'm a lifelong Democrat, and I felt that the country was shifting in ways that weren't good. Having spent time in Compton, I saw the problems of the inner-cities, the drugs and the violence and how they were not understood by most Americans. President Johnson and the Democratic Party had, I thought, been sucked in the mire of Vietnam that led to Johnson's presidency coming to grief and led to the election of Richard Nixon.

That said, I guess, I suppose too that I put myself first and joined Peace Corps because I wanted to go overseas and learn about East Asia.

Q: Well, let's talk about going to Korea as a Peace Corps volunteer. Do you want to talk about first the training and then what they were preparing you for? And then what you actually did and saw?

KLOTH: President Kennedy, of course, had started Peace Corps in the early '60s. We were told that the Korean government had asked for Peace Corps to come in as one of the initial programs. But the U.S. government refused because Korea's leader, former General Park Chung, came in via a coup d'etat, so the U.S. refused to send Peace Corps in then as part of the pressure on the coup makers to "democratize." By '66, Park's government had held elections, which he won to no one's surprise. The U.S. also wanted Korean troops in Vietnam, so the Johnson Administration sent Peace Corps to Korea. I've never reviewed the diplomatic record, so I'm not sure of the timing of decisions. The U.S. Administration did a lot more for Korea to reward it for sending its troops than just send a few recent college graduates to Peace Corps/Korea.

Q: Looking back Park Chung Hee was basically positive, I mean if you are looking at a country...



KLOTH: Well, in terms of development on the economic side, Korea was when I got there in '69 still a poor country. It had a long tradition of literacy, and there was a very strong drive in almost every family to educate their kids. The Japanese colonial government had started schools and a school system that the Koreans then built on with some assistance from us, but I think Korean get the primary credit. Korean families didn't rely just on schools because they had an entrance examination system for university in particular, for companies, for government. Kids would also go to cram schools, if their parents could afford it. That was a big "if," but as the country moved up on the economic scales more and more families' could.

Peace Corps was primarily an education program. Volunteers first were put in middle schools and high schools as English teachers. There was one group of science teachers, and one did rural health. By the time our group started training in '68, Peace Corps Korea decided to focus on teaching the teachers by putting us in university English and English education programs. We were in the seventh and eighth groups.

Earlier programs had problems. Middle and high school classes were so large that the spoken English program had minimal impact. We teach Foreign Service officers Korean for two years to get them to minimal professional competence, so you can guess what a struggle it was for the health volunteers after three months Korean which is what Peace Corps training was.

Most of the English teachers, in fact, did not speak English well. Many senior professors when I got there had been trained and gotten their degrees under the Japanese. They could often read quite sophisticated literature and could do things such as parse sentences in ways that I had forgotten, but they often couldn't speak with a great deal of fluency. No practice. After the false starts, Peace Corps decided to teach the teachers

Our two groups started in October in Hawaii. My group because each group had a number beginning with the first being K1. Our job was to teach in the English departments, and the K8, many of them had teaching experience or MAs, were to teach in education departments at the universities. We spent three and a half months, two and a half months on the big island, in what had been a World War II era military hospital with simple wooden walls, but in Hawaii, that was fine. We were taught Korean; we were taught English teaching methods, and we had Korean culture and history classes. We spent the last month on Oahu practice teaching and getting ready to go.



Korea Peace Corps had the highest extension rate, that is at the end of two years people wanted to stay another year, and the highest early out rate, meaning someone wanted to leave short of the normal two years, of any country in the Peace Corps at the time. There was therefore a lot of concern among the Peace Corps staff about trying to figure out who would stay two years and who wouldn't. The goal was to drop the trainees who weren't "likely" to stay. There were two reviews; a mid level review and a final review. They didn't exactly fire people, but if they thought they didn't want to send someone, they "counseled" until they decided to drop out and perhaps ask to go to another country. Except one guy who said, "What do you mean I shouldn't go? I'm in the top Korean class, and every other. Did any of the Korean teachers say I shouldn't go?" They backed down. He went.

Q: Did you ever figure out why...I can understand a retention rate because you are moving into a society that really loves education. Education is extremely important, so teachers get respect, but why the early out? What was the problem?

KLOTH: Within the training I think we started with 130 plus and 80 plus went. In the first week or two there were a lot who said, "I don't want to do this." Korea was a tough military dictatorship; it's physically tough; it's very cold in the winter, and we were in unheated classroom. There's a hard driving quality to Koreans which is why they've gotten where they have in terms of the success story in economic and now political development. All those factors, I think, combined to make it a place where if you decided, you don't really like it, it was a little hard to sort of isolate yourself with your books or travel around in-country or something and make do. Remember too this was 1968.

The North Koreans had taken the USS Pueblo. In fact, in December, when we were in training, the Pueblo captives, the sailors aboard the ship and the Marines, were released while we were there. The North Koreans had been and were still running armed infiltrators some of whom had been up in the mountains and had gotten shoot outs. People, including civilians were killed. So the Koreans had 50,000 troops in Vietnam and supported their troops as it were. So for an anti-Vietnam War American or even someone just coming from the atmosphere of a U.S. campus, even if they had no strong political views, this was a tough place.

You had to agree you were going to cut off your beard or moustache, and trim your hair because it was a very conservative society, and the schools were a very conservative part of that. Friends who had been in Peace Corps in some other parts of the world told me that they worked hard, often under rough conditions, except for Korea's cold, perhaps rougher than we did, but that the host country atmosphere was much more laid back. But maybe that's ways some of those countries are still in pretty paid shape, while Korea is a world leader in electronics. Then too, being trained in Hawaii in fall and then arriving in Seoul in January was more than a cultural shock.



For some volunteers, and probably most of us felt this way at some point, teaching English at a university in a major city wearing a coat and tie was not exactly a cutting edge Peace Corp-type job. Peace Corps' image was say working in a farming village.

Q: Okay, well you went out in January of '68?

KLOTH: '69, we started in October of '68 and January of '69 we arrived. It was very cold; school started in March, so we spent two weeks in a Korean inn. They called them a yogwan; it was a hotel, but the bathroom was down the hall sort of thing. Then we were put in families. No modern apartments to speak of in Seoul then. I had a very nice family, and they worked hard to make me feel at home. The president of our university had gotten her MA from USC (University of Southern California), and she had had one or more exchange students from the U.S. prior to our comintwo of us were assigned to the same university. The prior Americans hadn't apparently adapted well, so she was very solicitous.

I found among the professors there was a big cut. There were younger ones just starting to come back with U.S. PhDs. They spoke English well and were up on the latest. But many senior faculty, as I said earlier, had had much of their education under the Japanese and hadn't been able to go abroad. You can imagine what that means for a professor of English. You could feel the stress between the professors. For example, the head of my department was one of the older generation. He was very stand-offish when I first met him. Then one day in the faculty lounge, when I say lounge it was a room with a big pot bellied stove in the center of it, I'd just come from my Korean class, so he asked me what I was doing, and I told him in Korean. Suddenly he opened up, and from then on I always made a point of speaking to him in Korean. He was now my "teacher." We got along well because there was no danger other faculty or students would hear his awkward spoken English. It was a valuable lesson for my future work in the Foreign Service. Help the other guy do his job, and odds are good he'll help you do yours.

Q: Where were you?



KLOTH: I was at Chung-Ang University in Seoul for two years. I extended for a third year and spent it at the Supreme Court's Training Institute. Seoul at that time was a much different city than the great metropolis it is now. Korea was very poor; it was beginning its take off. I think it was just starting to lift off. It was not at altitude by any means. The Koreans were exporting a lot of cloth; they were doing screwdriver plant sort of activities. But they had a very planned development track, which was highly successful and modeled on the Japanese success. There were a lot of Korean laborers in places like Saudi Arabia and Iraq and Vietnam, working for Korean firms who gave them some spending money and deposited most of their pay in banks at home. Now the Korean firms abroad hire Filipinos or workers from similar countries to do the blue collar jobs in foreign countries but in 1969 Koreans did that tough work. When I started in '69, it was the cloth that was being exported rather than clothing. If you wanted something made like a shirt, you went down to the Korean market and ordered one, and they made it for you.

Q: How did you find the students?

KLOTH: At first I was depressed, because most spoke poor English even at the university level. After a semester though, I realized it was amazing was that some of them could speak English very well, given the obstacles, large classes, teachers not fluent, and high school classes focused on preparing them for university written exams, and spoken English was not part of that, it was impressive that any spoke English at all.

Q: How did you find the class situation?

KLOTH: I had 20-40 students with two sessions a week for each student. When I first went to the university, the Peace Corps Seoul representative, who had gone out and scouted all of these places, wasn't sure I would get the support from the school I needed in terms of size of classes or frequency of classes. When I got there, however, I found that not only did they live up to the agreement, but if I came up with things, they were enthusiastic. I found I could get an English-language movie at the U.S. Embassy's cultural center. When I asked if the university had a projector and could give me a room to show it, the administration immediately did so. We started showing one a month! I would discuss it later with my class; but it was open to everybody in the school. These were not top run Hollywood movies, but things like Winston Churchill or Franklin Roosevelt's life - these kinds of things. But the university was always very serious about supporting me.



I worked in a Korean organization. I think you come out of the Peace Corps with a different experience than if you work for an American business abroad, let alone the U.S. government. You are working in a Korean organization, and you have to figure out how that organization works. I'm not sure I figured it out but that's what you have to try and do. You are not in a position where you are telling people what to do or these are what the USG wants or else, or these are the rules of our American company.

Q: My experience in the outside is that the Korean organizations are very much driven by those above. The people below really are expected to produce, and if they don't, you just feel the tension and the sweat popping out, because they are given a task and they are supposed to do it.

KLOTH: Right. The university president very much ran the place. What was unique about Chung Ang was that the head of the university had created it herself, and she was a woman. In 1968 Korea and even today there aren't many woman university presidents in Korea. This was a coed university, there is a university that's a woman's university and yes there is...

Q: Like Ewha.

KLOTH: Yes, but this was a coed school, and she was quite a character. She would be out there when the students were demonstrating, and she would go out there and tell them to get back into class. They would but the next day they'd demonstrate again, and sooner or later run out the gates and clash with the police. You are talking about the top down and do what they say, but it's also the people at the top, at least the better ones, really feel that they have a responsibility that goes down the line as well. It was fascinating and with that I decided to stay a third year.

I visited the East Coast before I finally decided to stay. I had some money left over because I lived very modestly, and the school paid for my housing and things were cheap. So a Korean friend who was my colleague and I went out to the East Coast and its beautiful mountains. We met a Peace Corps friend out there who was living in the scholar's house of an old yangban, the old Korean nobility. It was just idyllic, cold, but idyllic mountains and ocean. And the air was so clean. Seoul was pretty gritty with charcoal used for house-hold heating, and trucks, buses, and cars belching fumes.



Peace Corps and Fulbright had a legal training program run by two lawyers for judges and prosecutors and the students at the Korean Judicial Training Institute. AID and the Korean government together sent ten to twenty Korean judges and prosecutors, there were almost no private lawyers at that time, to Berkley Law School for a year. Peace Corps provided English teachers for three year long and summer intensive programs. When the PC director heard I wanted to stay another year, he pulled me in. "We need to keep this program going and your colleagues (two lawyers) have been working it. They're leaving. There's a lawyer that AID has brought in to do the legal classes, but I need an experienced English teacher. I would like you to pick up the English teaching side of this and work with the lawyer." So I let him sort of hornswaggle me into doing that and didn't go out to the East Coast.

Q: What sort of impression were you getting of the political situation there?

KLOTH: Two years at university and then a third with legal professionals gave me a view into two different parts of Korean life. In the university the students would demonstrate in the fall and the spring; Korean University, Yonsei University and Seoul National University were the ones who would demonstrate first.

Q: These were the top schools?

KLOTH: These were the top schools, and then it would sort of go down the academic ladder, and the others would then start demonstrating. This activism, of course, came out of the April revolution that overthrew President Syngman Rhee. Large student demonstrations in front of the presidential mansion and then the police either lost their nerve or got overly aggressive or both, and shot into the crowd and killed some students, and then it all came apart in terms of support for the government. That started a tradition for politically active studentrush out and confront the police.

When I was there in the early '70s, the students would demonstrate. The issues would vary, but they usually with anti the Park government; these were not anti-Vietnam War demonstrations. In one of my first English club meetings with my students I was verbally assaulted as to why the U.S. government was supporting the Korean dictatorship in Korea and then lit into because American students were not supporting our soldiers in Vietnam fighting Communists. In many, many subsequent conversations, I realized both of these tracks were alive and well in the minds of many South Koreans of all ages.



One of the best points made in our training was that Korea has a love-hate relationship with the United States. You will never be treated better than you will be by Koreans. If you are in a bar and start talking with people, your money will no longer be any good. Strangers will want to treat you. On the other hand, certainly there is plenty of resentment. Because you speak Korean, you'll understand some of the nasty comments about "American SOBs" from some guys at another table. Of course, the same guy bad mouthing you will flee with embarrassment when someone tells him you understand. Or worse yet, he'll want to buy you a drink to make friends! The basic issue is Koreans want to control their national fate. They're grateful for the alliance but resent Washington making decisions too often with "notification" rather than consultation. We decide and then tell them, hopefully before we tell the media.

Q: What about the menace to the North? What were you picking up from your students?

KLOTH: Well, I think at that time the students like many Koreans were anti-Communist, but felt one, that the divided-country situation had been created by the United States, first with the agreement with the Soviets in WW II as to who would occupy where. Then, in many Koreans opinion, we didn't carry through and do whatever we had to reunite Korea after the North Korean attack. On more than one occasion students and plenty of other Koreans asked, "Why didn't you let MacArthur finish the job?"

If you brag a lot about powerful a country you are, as we tend to do, you shouldn't be surprised if, when you get a stalemate like the Korean War, people who feel they're suffering from the outcome believe you left them in the lurch. Of course, there were other factors contributing to the resentment. Koreans rightly felt the Japanese trampled on Korean culture. We Peace Corps volunteers were part of a wave of change as Korea sought to develop as rapidly as possible and still keep their "Koreanness." You'll recall there was a "culture war" going on in the U.S. too then.

Q: Did you feel under constraints either from the Peace Corps authorities or the Korean authorities or just by inference about how to treat dissent within the Korean student body?

KLOTH: We were told before we went to understand the U.S. government was sending us to Korea and that with Korean troops in Vietnam, it was inappropriate for us to engage in demonstrations against U.S. policy in Vietnam or to be a heated advocate against U.S. policy in Vietnam. As I recall, we were also told we could take a teacher's approach on any U.S. policy. You could say that this is the U.S. government policy and here are the anti-war groups, criticisms. We were also told correctly that we could expect the Korean authorities would keep a close watch on us and that, if the government felt we had crossed the line on anything from anti-Park statements to wild behavior, the Koreans could tell us to leave and Peace Corps would have to comply.



Q: It was very difficult during that period there were protests on the part of the Peace Corps volunteers. How about the Kent State business when, this is in the spring of 1970 when the National Guard actually fired on students at Kent State University and killed some.

KLOTH: Right, there again the usual line from older Koreans and particularly older professors was "that's what happened in 1960 in Korea and that's why the riot police don't have guns. But that's also why we aren't going to let demonstrations get out of hand."

The Korean governments response to the demonstrations was to...because they had intelligence agents among the students or students who would tell them and also you just knew it by the calendar. As you got near April 19 and school started in the middle of March, so by April 19 they would bring up the riot police in Chevy flatbed trucks, these aren't trailer trucks but trucks with a flatbed. They would have a fence wire screen over the top of it and the riot police had on helmets made of helmet liners and attached to them were...

Q: Like a bib?

KLOTH: Yeah, a kind of bib filled with sand on the back to protect the nape of your neck. Then they had a wire screen that would be pulled down over the front. Then they had shields and Billy clubs and shotguns with teargas attachments on them. They also had at that time what they called pepper fog sprayers; they were also used in the spring and summer against mosquitoes. They just carried them on the truck itself; later on they progressed to more armored trucks or things with mortars that would fire teargas shells. They weren't lethal unless you got hit by the shell it wasn't lethal. But basically they would come in and the students would meet either in front of the soccer field or the campus square; they would meet there and they would rally and talk and chant and sing. Then at some point they'd try to go out the gate and the cops would, at different schools and at different places, the cops would block it with a Roman legion shield wall and they'd fire teargas. Then they would at some point; usually they would let them block the traffic for a while too to annoy the rest of the citizens who are sitting in traffic. I think it still works this way but certainly it worked this way up to the mid-'90s when I was in Seoul seeing them. It was all highly choreographed; I mean each side knew what the other will be doing. Then at some point the police would say that they had to get the traffic moving again. The tear gas would go off. The front rank would put their shields sideways, and the back ranks would charge with their batons high, whack some protesters and try to grab the ones who were the ringleaders. That would go on for a week or so and then they would close the universities until things cooled off.



At my university there were never many students who demonstrated. The students sympathized but weren't willing to go out. Most of them thought that the demonstrations were heavy on symbolism but light on results. Across the country there was a consensus that economic development was number one and that the North Korean threat was real. People didn't like the government beating up students, torturing professors or newspaper people, but also were worried about "chaos" that might slow economic development or give the North Koreans a chance to use violence. Many South Koreans thought students should be studying. That was the consensus that the Park government played on.

Q: Let me just stop there. We are talking a bit about the difference between the North and the South, which at the time was maybe not that profound?

KLOTH: In the economic terms the North certainly had the mountains and the natural resources of the mountains such as coal and other \_\_\_\_\_.

Q: And waterpower.

KLOTH: The waterpower, the hydroelectric. During the colonial period certainly there was industry built around Seoul, but there was also industrial development in the North. While the North was heavily bombed during the Korean War and much of it was destroyed...well, actually it began with the Russians taking to the Soviet Union some of the machinery, etc., as they did in other places like Germany, but also the destruction of the war. The planned socialist approach plus aid from the Soviet Union enabled the North to rebuild some facilities. In terms of economic growth, scholars who looked at it as well as the U.S. government felt that up through the '60s, the North had made considerable progress. Perhaps it even did better in the 1950s than the South in terms of economics. Change started in the South in the 1960s.

Q: I was there right in the mid-seventies my second time there before; I was there during the war.

KLOTH: Right, during the war.

Q: But Park Chung Hee had made a critical decision, which most dictators don't make and that was that he was going to make the farmers reap the benefits of their production as opposed to most dictatorships who want bread or rice for the cities and they take it away from the farmers who make it. The farmers were doing well and this meant that you had good food production.



KLOTH: In the seventies he started the Saemaeul (New Village) Movement. Park had been a Japanese Army officer; he spoke Japanese very well as did virtually all Koreans educated before 1945. People continued to have high school reunions with their former Japanese classmates. So those kinds of cultural relations, as it were, kept going in a low key way with a love-hate feeling. Go back to the comment about the U.S. With the Japanese hate was very strong but probably strongest among those born after 1945. Older folks would say to me, "Ah, in 1968, this hatred of the Japanese is stronger among the young people who actually never suffered than it is among older people who, while we suffered, also had Japanese friends."

More importantly in terms of the larger policy Park and his group looked at Japan both before and after World War II, and particularly after, and said to themselves that the Japanese recovered from World War II quickly, and that's what we want to do, so we'll plan the economy around the development of large private companies. They also wanted companies large enough so that Japanese companies couldn't dominate the Korean economy.

The North played a role here too. Park and most other South Koreans saw economic development from a nationalist point of view, wanting it so people could live better and also for security vis a vis the North. The Northern threat was direct military aggression as well as subversion in the form of support for a Communist revolution. This was 1968, so Communist movements were still alive and well in many places. South Koreans were very worried about Communist infiltration into the industrial workforce as well as into the rural areas.

Students could not have summer jobs in a factory the way I did in college. First of all blue-collar people needed factory jobs. College kids were supposed to train for white collar work. The government was very suspicious of college students going out to rural areas, because they were afraid they were going to organize/radicalize farmers. So there was a strong feeling that we need to have economic development; we need to have workers get more prosperous, so they won't become Communists. We also need to limit conspicuous consumption by the people running the factories and the companies. More fundamentally, we need to develop by this Japanese model, which is planned development based on the nurturing of private industry, which of course can very quickly become crony capitalism, which is an element of this too. But there is no doubt that the Koreans have been highly successful in using this model and growing a country.



It also meant that the industrial people were also very worried about a Communist revolution aided and abetted by the North or another invasion. I remember our first embassy briefing when we were newly arrived in Peace Corps. My recollection was that the embassy briefer said that the North Koreans had a 350,000 man army with more tanks, armored personnel carriers and guns than South Korea with a 600,000 plus force. They told us that the U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) added the high-tech part - they didn't call it that at the time with well-equipped units. They felt there was still a little bit of hint of at least from one briefer, and I can't remember the exact words, and you were in the embassy so maybe I misunderstood what was said, but there was still a little hint of the pre-1950 concern that the South might if they had a proportionate number of armor be tempted to go North; so the U.S. was comfortable with this difference.

Q: That was always there, yeah.

KLOTH: More men in the South Korean armed forces but the U.S. forces provide the high-tech edge and in the North fewer men but more armor so this keeps the balance of power. In the mid-seventies we discovered that the numbers had changed dramatically in the North, but not in the South.

Q: Speaking of the embassy how much contact did you have in the Embassy?

KLOTH: Virtually none. One, we were told not to because Peace Corps was just you know...

Q: Yeah. Did you get involved...obviously going to a geisha house was out of your range but did you get involved or have to be concerned about the drinking because there was an awful lot of drinking. The men went out and one would be the designated leader who would stay sort of sober and the others would get really, really drunk.

KLOTH: I guess the guys you were hanging out with were pretty responsible. With students or the people I knew there wasn't anybody designated to stay sober. But we all took the bus home.



Having a car was way out of the price range of students or most Koreans then. The country was poor; further, the Korean government discouraged conspicuous consumption. Taxes were prohibitive. If you had a car, it was a company car; there was a driver and the car was black. Korea was making some cars, basically brought over in crates from Japan and assembled in Korea. "Recycling" was big; there were a lot of former Army jeeps "recycled" as private cars. Someone would get a jeep, strip it and put a hard body on it. A lot of Korean buses and trucks looked like they'd started life in the U.S. Army too. The black market was efficient. An American friend couldn't find the right size jeans in the market, so a shop keeper pulled out what my friend could see was a PX shipping list, asked him what size, run a finger down the list and told him to come back in four days.

Q: You left there in what '71?

KLOTH: I left there in late '71; I'd extended, so I spent three years. I went to the University of Washington (Seattle) for graduate school, where I did an MA in Korean Studies and then completed all but my dissertation for a PhD in East Asian history.

Q: How long were you at the University of Washington?

KLOTH: I was there four years and did my general exams. I went to Korea and Japan to do research, then I came back to write, but I was having trouble getting the work together and got in a rut. I saw friends finish and not get jobs, so I thought I needed to start looking around for alternatives. I was offered a job at a company in Japan with both Americans and Japanese running it; they wrote company reports for Japanese companies. It was a kind of a business information company. I also took the Foreign Service test but it took so long. I also applied for a job at DOD.

Q: Department of Defense.

KLOTH: Right, so I accepted the job in Japan, but I had to wait for my visa, and DOD meanwhile was doing the security check. I was sitting there in Seattle waiting for the Japanese visa to come back and the phone rang. It was a Saturday morning and the phone rang from DOD. They offered me the job, but wanted me in a week. Then the postman brought me a letter saying my visa had been refused. I discovered it wasn't an issue with me but a paperwork problem at the other end which would be "taken care of by the end of the month."

I didn't doubt it would be fixed, but the project I was working on to feed myself was finishing and two months was too long, so I decided to go east to DOD and negotiated an arrival a few weeks later.



Now, after I got to DC and had been there a month or two, I realized a federal bureaucratic calling you on Saturday morning was more than a little unusual. I've learned since that DOD seldom misses a trick when it comes to some things. President Carter was going to put on a freeze on hiring sometime the following month, and DOD wanted to make sure they had the new hires on board, so their Personnel office was told to work Saturday!

KLOTH: Department of Defense. I went there and having been F4 (physically disqualified) and never done military service, it was a fascinating experience. DOD is a huge place and a huge bureaucracy. My job was writing rather longer studies on military capabilities on the Korean Peninsula.

Q: Did you get a feel for the Department of Defense outlook that sort of stood you in good stead in later times? I mean these are different cultures than the Foreign Service. Did you pick up any of that while you were there?

KLOTH: I think so. In addition to my regular duties I also was sent in what was it, spring '81 for about six to eight weeks to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, sort of the mini-State Department at DOD, to augment their Korean affairs staff to prepare for the first Reagan Administration U.S. Secretary/Republic of Korea Minister of Defense meeting. The Carter administration in the late '70s, because of the coup in Korea, had stopped having ministerial/secretarial level meetings between the Defense Department and the Ministry of Defense in South Korea as an expression of U.S. dislike for the coup d'etat of 1980. So the Reagan administration as part of its new policies decided to renew those, so I was sent over temporarily and worked in that office.

Q: You were in DOD from when to when?

KLOTH: I was there from '80 to '82, and then in March of '82 I came to State. I'd kept my application, through the exam process, alive at State because I came to realize that at DOD my opportunities for going overseas were limited. I liked working at OSD, though, so who knows, if I hadn't come to State I might still be happily somewhere at DOD.

Q: Did you notice was there a perceivable shift at your perspective from when Carter left and Reagan came in?



KLOTH: I was far enough down in the food chain that it didn't affect me directly; however, there certainly was a change that one could feel. Literally, I remember Jimmy Carter to save energy had turned off the hot water in government buildings and turned down both the air conditioning and the heat. A day or two after the inauguration of the new president Reagan - I was in the bathroom and turned on the hot water without thinking, and hot water came out. Things had changed!

Obviously at the policy level there was a dramatic shift. In the Korean Peninsula area where I worked the first policy change was very clearly the embrace of President Chon and his coup-makers and, in my area at the time, the resumption of defense meetings at the secretarial and ministerial level with the Koreans.

Q: Well then we'll bypass the analysis bit because that treads on what still may be classified stuff...so what about in '82 what happened?

KLOTH: Even with experience at the Defense Department, you come into State as a Foreign Service Officer cold. You're headed for a visa line somewhere just like every new entrant. The advantage is, of course, when they hire you they match your salary; you get credit for prior service.

Q: Do you recall the oral exam, any of the questions now and how they struck you?

KLOTH: Right. Well, from what I heard from friends who came in through the oral exam in the early 1970s, there had been a huge change. I took it my senior year in college, just missed and then went on with other things. They had dropped diplomatic history sort of questions, and had a new system where you would have an interview as they used to have and you would do a writing sample, but they had also added on an exercise where they had you work through a hypothetical in-box. In our case they said you are running an international house at a university. We also had a group exercise. The exam was divided now clearly now into political, economic, consular and administrative fields. Having lived abroad in Peace Corps and as a grad student, I had some idea about consular work like getting a passport renewed or a document notarized or emergency evacuation plans.



Let me note what I discovered was an important change for me. I think in '78, they changed the medical standards and, while I had been in Peace Corps, etc., I have a handicap, which affects my ability to walk, although I can get around on my own and lived and traveled abroad with what seemed to me no trouble. I was told by the examining physician in 1981 that before '78, I would have been excluded on worldwide suitability grounds. I found it ironic. Working and living conditions in the Foreign Service officer with housing provided and working in heated buildings, central heating, etc. were a lot more comfortable than they were when I was in Peace Corps. That includes living in hooch in Baghdad where I had a heater and an air conditioner I never had as a Peace Corps Volunteer. So I think there was that historic change at State, in addition to the emphasis on equal opportunity for others. In our A-100 course, it seems to me that maybe about 40 percent of our class was female, I'm not sure. Also we had quite a variety of ages; I think the oldest person in the class was probably around 50; the average age for our class was about 30.

Q: You were how old at the time?

KLOTH: I was 35 at the time, so I was on the older end of the central group. We had some very young ones and, in fact, one of the youngest guys later went on to be an ambassador and assistant secretary. We had quite a variety of experience; we had people from various occupations, including business. The Department brings in people with a much broader experience base than most of the East Asian foreign services who bring in new officers right out of college.

Q: I think so. How did the class strike you?

KLOTH: I was very impressed. They were very sharp. We had a lot of experience in different things, which made lunches and coffee breaks interesting. Also folks had a chance to see other types of work and decided this was what they wanted to do. Coming back to your comment about the military, I remember when we went over to the War College. The president of the War College, an Air Force three star general, talked to us. He was one of the sharpest guys I've ever met in any business. He started by asking how many people had been in the military or had some experience with the military. Because in '75 the draft was over, we had some veterans, both men and women, perhaps 20-30 percent. The general said the single biggest worry he had for the future of not only our diplomatic corps but also government in the foreign policy area. That is that we wouldn't have people who had been, even if it was a two year draftee as a private, in the service and who understood the way DOD works and the way the military looks at problems. Given the struggles we're having in Iraq and Afghanistan getting military and civilians to function together effectively, he was prescient.



Q: You know it's true, I came in in '55 and we were practically all male and practically all had served. I had reached the exalted rank of Airman First Class but still almost all of us had military experience. It made it much easier to deal with people in the military because you kind of understood where they were coming from.

KLOTH: Actually flipping back to my DOD experience we did have one incident while I was there, that perhaps illustrates the challenge that the military and intelligence services faces in evaluating information and concern about the deadly serious consequences of being wrong. I guess from our post-Iraq War perspective it may seem tame, but it was my introduction to the security policy world.

In 1981, some in the intelligence community became concerned that the North Koreans were gearing up for a major military action. The evidence was such that there was also a lot of skepticism, but clearly everybody at DOD and the intelligence community focused in very hard but decided in the end that what was going on was an exercise.

I was at DOD and was part of one analytical group looking at the question. We all thought the totality of evidence indicated no attack, but also realized the terrible consequences of being wrong. We could feel that weight. We were very much aware of the Yom Kippur War, when the Egyptians had run forces up a number of times in practice to the Suez Canal but stopped when their toes got wet, but the final time they threw the assault troop across. While the Israeli's had stood up to some extent, they hadn't mobilized enough strength to prevent initial success.

So I think that's something when you talk about the military culture and perspective. DOD is very much focused on a possible opponent's capabilities, which is different from intentions. The first question was always what do they have, followed by what can we do if they use it? DOD is clearly in the business of dealing with capabilities and trying to prepare for that. At State we tend to focus more on intent.

Q: Intent usually implies logic. Unfortunately, our logic is not necessarily the logic of somebody else. Saddam Hussein went into Kuwait, and we seem to have thought maybe he would try to grab some peripheral oil fields which was logical to us. Going in and arousing the wrath of everyone and taking over all of Kuwait didn't seem logical, and we made the wrong judgment.

KLOTH: And it's a question too of their logic being based on assumptions they are making and factors that are driving them which we may not be aware of.

Q: Yeah.



KLOTH: Saddam repeatedly made bad decisions. We also need to remind ourselves in foreign relations, not everyone is impressed with U.S. decision-making. As we are reminded now in our financial crisis, it's not just foreigners and not just dictators who can make some very bad decisions. I don't mean to pick on us, but we are people, and sometimes we forget to be perhaps a bit more humble in holding ourselves up to others as a political or economic or societal model.

At any rate, so I went through A-100, which was fascinating. We went to other agencies and the Hill. I remember a Foreign Service officer at the NSC starting by saying to us, "I'm not quite sure why I'm still here because I started working at the NSC under Jimmy Carter and here we are in 1982 in the Reagan administration.... I guess because I was a career Foreign Service officer, they left me in place."

I heard later from friends both at State and Defense that was not usual for thaor other changes in administrations. Non-career FSO Ambassadors and other political appointees move on pretty fast, especially when the political temperature is high as it was in the Carter to Reagan shift.

Q: Well, almost from day one you got 24-hours to clear your desk and get out sort of thing.

KLOTH: Right. I had some three and two level officers who felt the heat because of the desk they were on when the Reagan transition team can into State. Sometimes the new political management in a transition has to learn that FSOs and our civil service colleagues see themselves as career civil servants. Tell us what the policy is, and we will work very hard to make that successful. There was on the part, I guess, of some of the people that came in on the Reagan transition a certain zealously and a certain lack of understanding of the way the career service works. Secretary Powell, as a career military officer, seemed to understand the role of professionals in the Department better. Usually too, after a new Administration comes in, the new management quickly discovers, and many know before they come in, that the policy options expressed during the heat of a campaign run into the brick wall of reality abroad or at home.

Q: In a way you almost had a feeling that a lot of America, particularly Central America, was turned over to the right wing; this is Jessie Helms and all. And just as long as you don't bother us in the Middle East and other more critical places or something like that. This is sort of the impression I get.



KLOTH: Right. But back to the story. In the A-100 at the time they were very big on telling everybody you will go overseas for perhaps your first and second tours. State wants to see how you'll function abroad before deciding after 3-4 years (at that time, now more like 3-5 years) whether to give you tenure. I discovered later that other foreign affairs services take the opposite tack. They keep you at home in the ministry for your initial tour or tours to size you up and also accustom you to how the ministry works. Another factor, I suppose, is that none of the services have the demand for visa officers we do or use a face-to-face interview so much in that work. We have a great demand for visa officers which we fill through first and second tour officers, as you know.

At any rate, in A-100, we were told we would be assigned to areas we hadn't been before to see how we'd function in a new place. In my case, China and Korea were there, Taiwan and Guangzhou and Seoul. Since I had spent so much time in Seoul, I went up and asked the director of junior officer personnel if it was worth my while to even put Seoul down because my wife had a Fulbright there." He said, "If you are interested, bid."

I found out later that there was no question from the time I walked in the door where I was going. In February '82, the Seoul consular section uncovered a major immigrant visa fraud operation, when a very sharp officer discovered some anomalies in immigrant visa applications. Investigation uncovered a long-time visa fraud operation, involving employees of the embassy and some visa brokers in the U.S.

Q: Well, that thing started bout '79, I think. The reason I say this is I was consul general. I had just gone to the head of the consular affairs, Barbara Watson, and said I think we have some real problems. She had our security officer replaced and brought a guy in who really went to work there. We uncovered some stuff, and we felt pretty good and all the time this other stuff was coming in. The Koreans are very good at this.

KLOTH: They have been a bureaucratic society a long time and have developed a lot of finessing skills to live with their own labyrinth of rules and paperwork.

Q: You know I used to tell the officers there, you know this is awful, we've got to do what we can to stop it but basically fraud or no fraud we are getting very good people in.

KLOTH: Right.

Q: Which we were.



KLOTH: Yeah. There were some other things that happened to. President Chun Doo-hwan, the coup-maker of 1980, began a program of liberalizing certain aspects of the society. One of them, for example, was making passports for tourism available; you had to go with a group or to see relatives. Until then it had been extremely difficult for Koreans to get a passport. A major reason was that the Korean government wanted to conserve foreign exchange. So, for example, if you wanted to study abroad it had to be a graduate school. You took not only the TOEFL and GREs, but you also had a Korean government exam to pass.

There were other things, the high school students wore uniforms whose origins goes back to actually 19th century Europe and then were Japanese educational standard during the colonial period. Japanese kids still wear uniforms, although they wear them in a style that is quite different from the old days with loosened ties and various other signs of protestor fashion. The Chun government said schools could set their own dress codes and students no longer had to wear uniforms.

So the government was easing up on the social constraints by the prior government without letting up at all on the control of politics. It also reflected the development in the economy and that there were people who were not just the "super rich" in a poor country, but middle and upper middle class that did have enough money to go see relatives or take a group tour to Europe. We also had through the '70s a phenomenon of increased immigration from Korea to the United States because of changes to the immigration law in what the '60s, so more Koreans had friends and relatives to visit here.

For that reason the consular section in Seoul was under the gun, and I had Korean and a lot of experience there, so there wasn't really a question of where they could use me best. As I looked at other people in our class' assignments, many were assigned to where they had been. When new people come in, there's no guarantee that a slot will be open in Korea, even if you speak Korean, so the JO people need to manage expectations, of course.

Q: Yeah. Also, in the business I've been on both sides of this. You have to be careful when people come in, they might have majored in Mongolian studies and they are going to go to Mongolia. Well, there might not be a place or maybe the feeling is particularly sometimes there is more to diplomacy for a professional than Mongolia. You have people who really aren't very moveable but again when the rubber hits the road and if you've got a consular crisis or something, I mean they throw everybody at it.

KLOTH: Right. But we also lose people like a good friend who was in Chinese studies, but when they offered him the job he said, this was in that same early '80s, the recruiter read the standard line which is "we probably won't send you where you've been. In fact, we try to send people to different places."



My friend had just got an offer from the CIA to work on China. They said, "China, that's what your background is." So he decided to do that. Clearly for the Department there is a tension particularly when you look at the hard languages. Now our desperate need for languages like Arabic is swinging the pendulum the other way.

I went to Seoul my first tour. I was in Seoul and my wife had her Fulbright, so that was very good and we could be together. I have a lot of friends there, so that was interesting. The visa work was hard, though. We interviewed visa or passport applicants from early in the morning to 3:00 or 4:00, when they closed the doors and then you had an hour to clean up paperwork, and 5:00 we were out. The management of the section was very tough minded about that which was good for the officers. We had huge lines around the block and couldn't keep up; there had not been an increase in officers to match the increase in applicants. Nevertheless, the feeling of management was that, looking at the numbers, staying until 6:30 or 7:00 every night was not going to make a significant decrease in that line. Unlike ever State job I had afterwards, evenings were our own.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

KLOTH: Dixie Walker, who had been a professor from the University of South Carolina, a China scholar and the first political appointee to ambassador to Korea. My first ambassador when I was in Peace Corps had been Habib, Philip Habib. I only met him once; he had dinner at the Peace Corps director's house with about 20 of us. He was a very impressive guy. It was good chance to share impressions of Korea. The volunteers' relationship with the embassy was basically distant. That was fine with everybody, and Peace Corps guidance. Koreans assumed we "reported" to the embassy, so we tried to dispel that notion in words and action. But it was useful to hear how the embassy saw things and to feel we had a chance to share our thoughts.

I found later as an FSO that no matter how much you get out, as an embassy officer, you need to hear as many sides as you can get. You need to hear from a range of people doing different things. It's too easy to fall into a rut with the "usual contacts." One incident I remember from Peace Corps stayed with me as a reminder. The one time I remember where we PCVs reached out to our embassy concerned the Chevy trucks USAID had given to the "combat police." As I recall the embassy's brief, the original idea was that the combat police were specially trained to combat North Korean infiltration of armed agents, a real problem. The trucks provided mobility and were to be used primarily on the coast. But the combat police were used in the cities as riot police. The riot squads stationed in front of universities drove up in the trucks with big USAID logos on them. I remember one student coming up to me and saying, "Why did you give them those trucks to come and beat us?"



At one of our regular Peace Corps meetings, we said to the Peace Corps director, "You know, we try to talk about the U.S. government policy of not supporting dictatorships [and avoid criticizing Park, by that time an elected President, directly], but you've got those USAID branded trucks out there."

The Director told us that the embassy asked the Korean police not to use the trucks for such duties. The Koreans responded very quickly - they repainted the trucks and replaced the USAID clasped hands with the national police logo!

Q: Well let's come back to '82. Who was the consul general?

KLOTH: Ken Keller. He had been a political officer in Europe who found it so frustrating working on Eastern Europe where "nothing seems to change" that he decided to do something "more hands on." He moved over into the consular business.

At any rate, he was under the gun in the sense of a sudden jump in the number of applicants because of the Koreans opening the floodgates to tourism and others.

Q: We didn't really have walk-ins.

KLOTH: Right, they also eased up on student passports. If you wanted to apply to go to a high school or even an elementary school in the U.S., you could do that. Yes, there were some who were going to good schools and clearly good students, but there were a lot of other folks who, and this is still a feeling among some Koreans, thought, "Well, my kid isn't doing well, not going to be able to pass the exam in Korea to get into a good university here, so I'm going to send him or her to the U.S. to live with a relative or just going to get an apartment myself, and we are going to send him to the local high school, because then they'll be able to get into a university in the States. When they come back to Korea, they'll speak English well or maybe they'll just stay in the States."

Plenty of other people wanted to seek their fortunes in the U.S. as well. So we had a flood of people of dubious academic backgrounds, dubious job prospects in Korea, say, working in jobs in Korea in small companies or under-employed who wanted to live in America. The visa brokers could make really authentic looking Korean and even U.S. documents of all kinds.

The vice consul's job of deciding in 2 minutes whether you were being lied to or just talking to a nervous but legitimate applicant who just wanted to see Disneyland. We had 20 percent refusal rates. We also had long lines around the embassy, and it was hard to meet even old friends without hearing complaints.



Q: Did you get involved with fraudulent marriages of people getting an Asian wife and that sort of thing?

KLOTH: Well, fraudulent marriage was a problem but hard to catch if people kept their stories together. I recall one case of an American resident in Korea for some time with a perfectly legitimate job where all seemed on the up and up. A few days after I issued the spouse a visa, the Immigration and Naturalization Service representative in Seoul came in and said, "This guy called me up and said that it was fraudulent. His actual girlfriend had some financial issues and borrowed money from somebody she shouldn't have. She and her boyfriend were told they could clear the decks if her boyfriend would engage in a fraudulent marriage."

We called Korean immigration and told them to stop the visa-holder. They discovered that the person hadn't left country, so maybe they lost their nerve too. Consular work is tough because you know you'll inevitably deny some legitimate people and issue visas to some who will never return. But the pressure must be immense post-9/11, but illegal immigration, not terrorism, was our chief concern in a place like Korea of the 1980s.

Q: You really change their lives.

KLOTH: Yeah, but again Ken Keller, our consul general, was very good in terms of training us and our section chiefs continually kept us informed of the latest usually scams.

There was also the challenge within the embassy of people in various sections coming down to refer people who it turned out they really didn't know in order to help out an official contact. In general the section chiefs handled all those cases. When I returned in the political section in the early '90s, the shoe was on the other foot. Speeding someone through the visa process was a useful favor to be able to do. On the other hand, if I got involved in anyway and the visa was refused, that didn't help me. Having been a visa officer, I had some idea of the "bad case" warning signs and refused to get near those requests for assistance. We had a sharp NIV chief, and he set up a very useful system where you could ask that a person be given an interview appointment, if you didn't know the case well enough to "refer" it to the consular section with a note that you knew the person well. Getting a call from the visa section to come in for an appointment at such and such a time sure beat waiting for hours in line, so it was appreciated by your contacts. On the other hand, my credibility was not on the line with my consular colleagues or, if refused, with the person who had asked for the help for say a constituent.



Let me finish by noting that working the consular section gives a new officer from any cone a lot of experience that she or he will use in the Foreign Service. You have to learn to gather the facts and analyze them fast. You have to make decisions quickly and be able to justify them. You also learn to work with interpreters. It's often said that foreign negotiators who speak English have an advantage of American counterparts because the foreigner can use the translation time productively to consider the response and may pick up nuances lost in translation. On the visa line I found it true. Although I speak Korean, in tough cases, I would call an interpreter over to give me more time as well as to be sure I did not miss anything. I could also check on the quality of interpretation. Another often unrecognized skill learned on the line and useful later is how to work with an interpreter, even if you do not speak the language. You have to speak clearly so the interpreter can understand and to be alert as you listen to the English interpretation back to you as well.

Q: What was the situation in Korea at the time?

KLOTH: Now to leap to the politics. In 1979, when I was still a grad student in Seattle, Park Chung Hee was shot. That set in motion a succession process that turned into a slow motion coup. In the end Major General Chun Doo-hwan, head of the Defense Security Command, was in the key position when the chief of the KCIA shot the president. The head of the KCIA was not part of an extensive coup. I mean there was not a coup group, including military leaders. When the generals realized that this guy didn't have any army divisions behind him and none of them were with him they arrested him But then Chun Doo-hwan and a group who had gone through the military academy with him slowly expanded their control, shoving aside the three civilian Kim's - Kim Jong Pil, Kim Dae Jung and Kim Young Sawho were competing with each other politically and other players out there. The prime minister when Park was shot was not a strong enough individual to deal with this very difficult situation.

KLOTH: In March 1980 I had started in DOD, so I was in the U.S. government when the Kwangju incident happened. The Kwangju uprising was the result of Korean army units' brutality when they clashed with students protesting Chun's seizure of power. The army then retook the city. The repercussions are still out there both for Koreans' attitudes toward the Chun Doo-hwan group and toward the United States as well. In 1982, the wounds were still fresh and resentment toward the U.S. at higher levels than I had ever seen. Koreans of all political shades believed that we were "actively complicit," because we had a four-star general in Korea who was the UN commander. How, many asked, could Korean military units have moved and been used in the coup or in Kwangju without his authorization?



The change in Korean's feelings toward the United States was palpable. There was an escalation on the negative side of Koreans' attitudes towards the US, reflecting their fundamental dislike of their own government as well. Part of the mix was the Reagan administration's position that the Carter administration had been naïï½ve about the fundamental struggle between Communists and non-Communists in many countries around the world. As a symbol of the change in the Reagan administration's policy from what it considered the naïï½ve attitude of the Carter administration, Chun Doo-hwan was the first foreign leader who visited President Reagan.

The issue illustrates a key foreign policy dilemma. The challenge for the U.S. in dealing with governments such as coup d'etat governments or other dictators is that they have bet their lives. If a coup fails, the odds are good the participants will get death sentences. When we try to exert our influence, we are playing poker with a guy who's bet his life. When the ante starts to go up, we're going to have to fold in most cases because we won't be willing to bet it alwhatever that happens to be.

Q: That covers the "big picture" then, but I'd like to pick up the tale of what an FSO does. Did you get involved in the protection of Americans and all that? American services? Were there many problems there or was this mostly notarial or passport type of thing?

KLOTH: Yes, I did three months in that as well. We did a fair number of passports, including lost passports. There were some touching individual cases. The most touching ones involved people in some kind of distress. One little girl visiting relatives fell off a second story balcony of an apartment and was hurt. She broke her anklyou can imagine when her mother described what happened at the start of the call, I feared much worse. Her folks wanted to get her back to the States for medical treatment of her broken ankle and wanted a U.S. military medical evacuation plane. She was not in a life threatening condition. I had to explain that those were for our soldiers and that we would help her parents get in touch with the civilian airlines. At first, though, there was a lot of discussion with her parents. They assumed, as did many other Americans, that the U.S. Air Force would zoom them home. The U.S. airline they had come in on was very solicitous, however. I checked with the family just before departure to make sure everything was on track, and they were much relieved.

Q: What did you do after your year and a half back in the consular section?



KLOTH: Then I went to Japan, to Fukuoka via a six month refresher Japanese in Yokohama to bridge the December 1983 to July 1984 gap before the incumbent in Fukuoka transferred. Japan was very popular as an assignment. There was a boom of interest at U.S. universities too. Japan's economy was booming, and the trade friction with the United States made the trade issue number one. Now I understand that China is all the rage and understandably so. That's where my interest in the Far East started.

When I was in Tokyo in the late '70s as a graduate student, the Japanese press was full of trade issues and the back and forth about U.S. complaints about Japanese protectionist policies which were accurate. The Japanese, of course, said U.S. companies didn't try hard enough and that had some truth as well. For my second tour then, I thought I'd like to see the situation from outside Tokyo, and got a job at the consulate in Fukuoka as economic-commercial officer. A friend of mine recommended a consulate as fun, and it was. I did a lot of public speaking everywhere from Rotary clubs to Chambers of Commerce. I had two very good Japanese employees; we worked with American businessmen who were in the area and helped them sell everything from women's leotards and Texas beer to nuclear power plant equipment. I was there from summer of '84 to summer of '86. We had a consul, economic/commercial officer plus a consular/admin officer because at that time Japanese needed visas to come to the United States. We also had a USIS cultural center.

Q: Was the Japanese Red Army an issue at the time?

KLOTH: No, it was pretty well gone. We did computerized name checks for visas. Occasionally we'd have demonstrations in front of the consulate, but they were rather small and not a danger. Japanese police would always bring a police bus around, but I never saw a confrontation.

The Chinese consulate general was down the street from us. A big black right-wing bus would come by sometimes with its loud speakers blaring. Just after they passed my window you'd hear the guy changing from the anti-US to the anti-Chinese tape.

Q: Okay. How would you describe particularly from your perspective relations with the United States at that time?

KLOTH: Because of the heated negotiations over trade issues at the time, a key mission of the consulate was to get out and tell the U.S. side of the story. We also helped U.S. firms enter or expand in the market. We knew the people in the companies in the region as well as the local economic situation.



Japanese in our area felt the overall U.S. relationship was important to their country but that Japan was being picked on unfairly on trade. In their view, Japan needed to export to buy raw materials such as oil and minerals it did not have. Japanese companies' success was a result of finding out what foreign markets wanted and making it at a good price. Most Japanese I met felt that the basic problem was U.S. companies weren't any longer internationally competitive vis a vis Japanese companies. Trade complaints, and automobiles were the big centerpiece, were unfair. In their view, U.S. companies had gotten lazy and were not producing high quality goods from TVs to cars.

While U.S. buyers of Japanese products were clearly saying the same thing, in its post-WW-II drive to grow its economy, the Japanese government had, in large part by design but also because of the way its bureaucratic system worked, closed its market to protect its companies. One major issue in negotiations was the difference between U.S. and Japanese standards. We can go further into this and other trade problems later. In a consulate you do not negotiate but you certainly investigate and provide useful information and perspective to Washington.

Take the case of autos. I went to the Cadillac dealer in Fukuoka. And I said to him, "You know, I'm reading in the press about all these safety requirements that are being levied on all foreign autos to conform to the Japanese 'safety standards.' Could you show me on the Cadillac what has to be done to pass Japanese inspections?"

He clicked off the list which meant that Cadillacs, like other foreign cars, had to have a number of modifications done in a GM shop in Japan. That added to costs. For example, cars were required to have turning signal lights visible from the right and left sides as well as from the front and rear, so GM had to put on additional little lights on. That's probably not a bad idea for safety, but the "standard" that really got to him was that the requirement to have a metal plate under the engine. He had been told that was so if you parked on grass the hot engine wouldn't set the grass on fire. Where, he wondered, do people park cars on grass in Japan?

I used to do a lot of factory tours and saw the strength of the relationships between Japanese firms and their suppliers that was very difficult for a foreign firm to break into. I visited a shipyard in Nagasaki in '85. They said, "Well you know the competitive pressure is coming on from Korean shipyards, so we have to cut our costs which means our suppliers are going to have to cut their costs. But we send engineers around to them; we send bookkeepers around too and see if we can help them to cut back, to rationalize and improve the efficiency of their operations."

The yard was reluctant to look for new suppliers even in Japan, let alone abroad in the US. Yard management knew their suppliers and felt they could count on them. From their viewpoint, the start-up costs of a new supplier were high. Nevertheless, shipyards are businesses. When in 1985, the Plaza Agreement greatly strengthened the yen against the dollar, we got a call from them asking for to help finding U.S. suppliers!



Rice was a very sensitive issue, you may recall. I went to Saga City to talk to rice farmers. They were pretty excited that the U.S. was demanding that they open their rice market. But it was not personal. They were gracious hosts. In that area, the farmers blamed Japanese government farm policies for making it difficult for them to be competitive internationally. Cheap farm credit and taxes, especially for small farm machines, let "weekend farmers," people with office jobs, buy equipment and supplies at favorable rates and encouraged them to hold on to small plots and made it very expensive for full-time farmers to increase their farms size, and so, my farmer friends pointed out, become more competitive.

Q: Well, that rice thing was very tricky wasn't it? I mean, as agriculturalists in the United States know European agriculture is protected.

KLOTH: The U.S. also has quotas for agricultural products such as sugar. It is my bottom line is and still is my bottom line: trade friction is an economic problem; it's a political problem. At any rate, our job was also to give hands-on assistance to U.S. firms. We had a number of success stories for companies large, medium and small, on both sides of the Pacific. I worked with Westinghouse in Tokyo and a Japanese power company in Kyushu to restore their frayed relationship on purchase of nuclear-power-plant equipment. I spent about a year and a half and the result of a \$10 million deal. As econ-commercial officer, I was not a Westinghouse salesman per se, but lived in Fukuoka and could act as a go-between. Living in Fukuoka I could make drop by and talk to the Japanese firm about how things were going. I could anticipate issues, call Westinghouse and tell them to come down and head off problems. We did the same thing for small U.S. businesses or new-to-market companies too. For example, our work resulted in a U.S. firm finding a Japanese franchisee after years of trying.

I also enjoyed living in Kyushu, having lived in Tokyo as a grad student.

Q: This was a period where the Japanese system seemed to be the world model.

KLOTH: Do you remember Ezra Vogel's popular book on Japan as number one? But there was another side; the Japanese companies did not escape the economic challenges businesses anywhere have. The Nippon Steel in Kitakyushu and Oita had had to institute a RIF (reduction in force) in the '70s and '80s. They didn't like to fire people, but tough business conditions forced them to stop hiring, offer buy outs; and "early retirement" workers, often by placing them in suppliers' companies.

I asked one supplier of industrial-size steel containers how that worked: did he need more help? I had heard some argue that because of "unique Japanese culture," Japanese large firms and their suppliers "cooperated harmoniously on such issues.



The small company manager I talked to had perhaps a different perspective. "Yeah, they did the RIF. I had a hundred or so employees. The economic situation was hitting my sales too. The steel company approached me to take three of their people. You've got to understand I buy the steel for my cans from the steel mill. The mill is also my major customer. Now, if they ask me to help them out, what am I going to say?"

I loved going to the plants and talking to the managers someone else not from the PR section. I worked at a Sikorsky helicopter plant one summer in college, worked on the production line. The best plant tours are always from a manager, engineer or foreman. You want someone who knows the business and the plant floor. A PR person knows a script. The foreman can really know what's going on, what it takes to keep production and quality up, and also some time perspective on changes at the facility. The most impressive thing for me in Japanese plants for all the excellence of the Japanese work force was that every plant I went to would start out the briefing with how they were automating further to cut down on labor costs.

Q: Was it apparent at that time that the Japanese had a real problem in demographics?

KLOTH: Yes, but the automation was being driven by a desire to be more efficient overall. Remember in the 1980s, the Japanese were very confident. Japan seemed to be number one; the economy was booming. Pollution and other such issues popped up in the '60s and '70s, and the government had started to address them.

Q: Were you seeing the change of the social dynamics of women, particularly businesswomen?

KLOTH: Yes, but it was still a very conservative society.

Q: They weren't, I mean I remember in Korea when I was there it was somewhat the same thing, people loved working for the American embassy, particularly women did. They were top rate people because if they worked for a Korean business, if they were married they'd have to quit. With us we didn't care.

KLOTH: That was true when I was in Korea too. And Japan. Big and medium companies let women go when they got married. Of course, women in, both countries did and still do run many small businesses.

Life was no picnic for men in even big companies. For example, the companies in Tokyo and Osaka would rotate their people to the "provinces." The big companies had one-room company apartments in Fukuoka for these tours. Families did not want to move the kids around and disrupt their education, when Dad did a two-year tour in Fukuoka.



Q: How did your wife find it being Korean?

KLOTH: Overall she enjoyed Japan and Japanese friends, and still found time to write her PhD dissertation, and have a baby, our son. A lot of the potters in Kyushu came over in the 16th century from Korea, so, while there was some prejudice, in that area, there is also a special relationship.

Q: Did the American military presence there cause any problems?

KLOTH: There are two major bases: the Iwakuni naval air base and the Sasebo navy base, both modest in size. As the economic guy, I wasn't involved directly if there were issues, the consul handled them. People in the area appreciated the security relationship, but criminal incidents or accidents grab headlines. There was one bad incident where a serviceman got into an altercation at a Mr. Doughnut's shop in the middle of the night. The Mr. Doughnut clerk wound up dead, so the consul worked with the base commander to ensure that the citizens of Iwakuni understood U.S. dismay at the incident. Expressions of regret are very important in Japan among Japanese, so it is critical that U.S. representatives be proactive. That is very important.

In Sasebo, if ships came in some demonstrators would go out in their boats and the Japanese police would be out there; but it was not like the situation in Okinawa. The footprint was pretty small in Kyushu. At least in the Japanese business circles I traveled in throughout the region, I didn't hear concerns about base-related issues.

Q: How were your relations with the embassy?

KLOTH: Actually my closest work relationships were with the commercial section of the consulate general in Osaka-Kobe. Our work was not negotiations and policy, but focused on helping U.S. firms come into the market or Japanese firms buy U.S. products, that is, establish relations with U.S. companies. We had a very good and experienced consul in Fukuoka.

For my commercial work I would go up every six months to Tokyo, and see the American Chamber of Commerce. That's how I learned of Westinghouse wanting to come back to Kyushu. Day in, day out. The Commerce Department's Foreign Commercial Service officer in Osaka was my closest colleague. We talked regularly to exchange ideas and leads.



We collaborated with Osaka to get more American business people to come down to Fukuoka. The likely candidates were those who already had made the mental leap out of Tokyo and were willing to go to Osaka, that is to the provinces. I had good relations with the Tokyo econ section and FCS. I did a lot of speeches, talked to people and local media, so I needed to know what was going on in the trade negotiations. But in terms of the real work on the commercial side Osaka was the big help.

Q: Well, you left there in '86? Where did you go?

KLOTH: I left Fukuoka in the summer of '86. Now I'd finished my first two tours overseas, and so I thought, well, it's time to go back to the States. A friend of mine was working the U.S.-Korean political and diplomatic relations slot on the Korea in the Department. I got a call from the desk asking if I would I like to come back and replace him. The A-100 junior officer class counselor about diversifying, I wondered whether this was a good idea, so I called up my CDO. She immediately said, "That's going to be a great job, take it." I said, "What about diversification?" She laughed and said, "Well, you're in Japan now; that's Korea."

I will confess the one hesitation I had was over what U.S. policy was going to be toward the '87 Korean election. Would a conservative U.S. administration push for a truly democratic process or acquiesce, even collaborate, if Chun Doo-hwan, who was the dictator at the time and president, tried to continue in power in one form or another? Many thought he would, in spite of the one term stipulation in the constitution his government had written. I expected him to try and short circuit this system.

I wondered whether the Reagan Administration understood how much damage Chun and the perception of U.S. support for him had done to our relations with Koreans in general. I was very concerned that if we got in a situation not perhaps that bloody, but nevertheless where the U.S. was perceived as helping Chun Doo-hwan stay in power through some kind of illegitimate use of force, or manipulation of the system, that this was going to do a lot more damage. If I were the US-Korean bilateral relations desk officer, while not being the decision-maker, I was going to be part of it, ...be up to my ears in supporting a policy I thought wrong.

I decided, after thinking about it hard, there was another side, that perhaps I could have some influence on this process at a critical time. I was happily surprised when I got to the desk that Desk Director, David Blakemore, Bill Clark, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, and Assistant Secretary Gaston Sigur, as well as people working at Heritage Foundation, who knew Korea, understood the dangers that we were facing. Chun was unpopular in Korea. In the U.S. Administration, many felt strongly that the time had come for Korea to move on, meaning to have elections that were perceived by Koreans as being really democratic. (I refer readers to the oral histories by Sigur and Clark as well as Harry Dunlop, political counselor in Seoul, then Korea Desk Director from the summer of 1987.)



In this case, having a very conservative U.S. administration, in fact meant that we more influence than we would have with a liberal administration. President Chun had based his legitimacy, in part, on his "special" relationship with President Reagan. If President Reagan's conservative administration, was telling Chun to keep his word and step down and to have fair elections, that was very powerful.

Q: What were our interests and concern with South Korea, which we are talking about, in 1986?

KLOTH: That mid-'80s was a transition period; not only were the politics of Korea changing but also its economic situation. Korea was moving into the "developed" category. In 1969, Korea exported cloth and wigs. By 1986, it was electronics and cars, including cars to the US. Korea hosted the 1988 Olympics. It was their coming-out party on the world stage. The Olympics was also a pressure point for Chun as well. If he did anything that marred the Olympics, that would have been a political disaster.

Korea now had developed its economy to the point where trade issues with Korea were on the table in meetings of high-level U.S. and Korean officials. It was partly a kind of by- blow from the highly contentious trade relations between Japan and the United States in the '80s, but it also reflected Korea's growth as an economy and success as an exporter. Koreans were advertising Seoul's wonderful preparations for the Olympics, so Americans found it harder to understand why Koreans were keeping in check sales in their country of American products from cars to movies to beef. Koreans' argument that they were still a "developing" country was harder to swallow when people in the U.S. saw Hyundai cars driving our streets. Koreans, of course, were indignant that they should be rolled up with the Japanese as a "protectionist export machine," although that was the Japanese clone model they were using so effectively. Koreans felt they were still pulling themselves up by their bootstraps, and now we were punishing them for their hard work.

Q: Was the Korean economic attitude parallel to the Japanese one where they had the rice farmers and other groups who were really trying to protect or was it different?

KLOTH: Of course, Korean industries and agriculture were trying to keep the protective wall up, as did the same sectors in many countries, including Japan, the EU and even the US.

Q: How did we view the threat from the North at that time?



KLOTH: Well, the big change, I think, in our view of the North was in the late 1970s, we discovered that, while the South was outstripping the North economically, the North Korean army had ballooned up in numbers and equipment. Through much of the '80s, our concern was on the conventional threat. In the late '80s, just as I was leaving the desk, the nuclear threat from the North jumped to the forefront of our concerns.

When I was on the desk, there was even an effort to reach out to the North, but the North Korean agents blowing up of a South Korean airliner put a tamper to that. We were much concerned about the security of the Olympics and another North Korean attempt to use violence to stop them.

Q: Yeah, that's what I'd heard.

KLOTH: To 1988, where Korea was, if not a developed country, rapidly developing; it was moving from the developing into the developed category.

Q: As you know, I've been interviewing Alan Leo who was sort of Olympics officer at the time.

KLOTH: Right.

Q: He said, "The Olympics did sort of expose a strain that hadn't been as obvious before and that is anti-Americanism."

KLOTH: Right.

Q: I mean, how did we feel about one of the things about Korea getting out from under us was we'd been if not an occupying power I mean we are a very substantial player there which could be resented?

KLOTH: Well, with due respect to Al, anti-Americanism has always been there. I think it came out more publicly in 1988. One thing that did strike me coming back to Washington in '86 was how many Americans of influence didn't seem to realize that there was this other side, that the relationship had a love component and also a hate component or a resentment component.

Q: Out of curiosity what sort of nicknames would you get?



KLOTH: Perhaps one might compare to some of the unflattering terms used in the New York of the 1950s for any number of ethnic groups. Al is certainly right, I think, that in some incidents at the Olympics, anti-Americanism shot to the surface. The American team walked in the stadium waving rather than marching in lock step, and Koreans reacted badly. Koreans are highly sensitive to their own sense of decorum. Many decided that the Americans were being deliberately disrespectful. Koreans are more self-confident today. I suspect they would react differently to the waving per se, although they are still quick to resent real or perceived slights to their national dignity. I think all the teams wave now.

Q: Okay, well, then what was the view when you arrived, I'm trying to capture this, of Chun Doo-hwan, what was going to happen? What did we think?

KLOTH: The concern was that Chun would manipulate the system in a way that would either keep him in the presidency or in a renamed office that would leave him as the ruler of Korea or that he would pass it on to Roh Tae-woo, who was one of the co-conspirators in 1979 and 1980, through a process that was undemocratic. Our hope was: 1) that Chun would, as he had said he would from the beginning, serve one term, and then leave and 2) that most Koreans would see the process of electing his successor as democratic, regardless of who won.

We were also very concerned that Chun would use the military to stay in power or that in another scenario army officers would stage a coup against the widely unpopular President. Then Korea might see bloody resistance and wind up with another dictator. It was all too easy to imagine dire scenarios in which South Koreans used violence against each other, even without North Korean intervention of some kind.

We were also concerned, of course, about North Korean large or small attacks. The North Koreans had not moved against the South either in 1960 or 1980. Only the North's leaders know why. But if there was some kind of violent conflict going on in the South in 1987, would the North make some violent move?

Q: As one looks at this, one is struck by the fact that the North doesn't come probably because the leaders there are pretty happy with the way things are. If they get into a war, it sounds like they'll grab something, but it's unsettling, and a good chance they would lose. But the way things are, they keep the threat going and keep their generals happy and what the hell.



KLOTH: Good point. We often forget, but the North Koreans don't, that if the Chinese had not intervened, Korea would have been united as the non-Communist Republic of Korea in 1950. While we may focus and must focus on the potential for them to attack the South, from their point of view a war could also lead to the North being "liberated." After 1950, they have been careful how they use violence. Deadly but very cautious; now that doesn't mean that this nuclear threat isn't real.

Q: How did you find the Korean embassy during the time you were on the desk?

KLOTH: I got to know my counterparts very well. They were very impressive. The officers I knew went on to become ambassadors and two, foreign ministers. From what I've seen of Korean foreign ministry officials, the U.S. gets the very pick of the crop. The Japanese embassy also gets excellent officers, and I'm sure China sends their best now, too. Koreans appreciated somebody who'd lived in Korea as a Peace Corps volunteer. I think that added a certain bonding element. Kathy Stephens, now our ambassador to South Korea, was a great step forward for the US, because she was a Peace Corps volunteer and could speak Korean. In spite of Korea's importance, she's the first Korean-speaking U.S. ambassador.

Q: Did you find, I mean this was not at your level, it was a level or two above, but was there a problem that Korea was sort of in competition with Japan and China for attention in the Asian bureau and that Korea would take a third place or not? Or did you have any feeling?

KLOTH: Japan and China are the big fish, of course. That said, my experience with the Department is the focus goes on where there is a crisis. Korea got plenty of attention right up to the White House the closer we got to the election. If a memo I wrote went up to the Undersecretary or Secretary or even to the White House, it was read. The feedback that we'd get on various issues showed that high level people were thinking hard about Korea, trying to make the right policy decision.

Whether they thought about Korea "more" than Japan or China, I couldn't say. Certainly once the 1988 Korean election was over peacefully, and Roh Tae-woo's victory seemed to have been accepted by Koreans, interest at the top dropped off. I wasn't getting calls for quick updates to the White House the way I had before. But that was typical of the way the Department operates. It's a big world. There's plenty to worry about at the top. If an issue seems settled at least for the moment it's time to focus on what isn't settled. In Korea desk's case, support for a successful Seoul Olympics and North Korea quickly took center stage. Check Harry Dunlop's oral history. I left the Korea desk for Japan desk in summer 1988, but Harry stayed on as director.



Q: Let's talk a bit more about how U.S. policy developed during the time before the Korean election of '87?

KLOTH: Yeah, it was '87. Well, Gaston Sigur made clear in his February '87 Asia Society speech that the U.S. government expected President Chun to keep his promise that the next change of government in South Korea would be a democratic one and the Korean military would also stay out of politics. I was gratified, since I wrote the speech. In late fall we knew this speech was on his calendar in February, and Desk Director David Blakemore thought the speech should be an important statement of policy before what we expected to be a hot spring in Seoul. Spring is the student demonstration season. We saw the potential for an escalation into violence. Given Chun's unpopularity, demonstrations might well grow, in which case Chun might use the military to stay in power or might himself be overthrown by a coup. The North Koreans might seek to take advantage in some violent way as well. On the plus side, a successful 1988 Olympics was tremendously important to the majority of South Koreans and that, we hoped, would be a powerful force for responsible behavior by Chun and his colleagues.

David asked me to take a crack at doing the speech. I'd drafted quite a few remarks and talking points for high level meetings in the fall, so used them as a guide. When David read my first draft and said, "Okay, but I think we should be even more frank. Go back, and give me what you really think we ought to say now. Don't worry about staying within the lines of what was approved for us to say up to now."

I did. I heard later through the grapevine that a number of folks up the line cleared with a bit of hesitation about potential negative reaction among some U.S. conservative politicians. The speech was well received by many in Korea and the U.S. who knew Korea and were worried about the consequences of Chun trying to cling to power. Secretary Shultz on his March trip to Seoul reiterated that what Assistant Secretary Sigur said was what the Reagan administration believed it was time for a change.

In the end we'll never really know why Chun did what he did, what weight U.S. policy had on him. I think the key element in the change as we look back was the feeling of Koreans of all political stripes that Korea had grown beyond dictatorship. The economy and society had grown beyond where people were willing to accept strong-man government necessary for development and holding the Reds at bay, Park and Chun's mantra, and one that through the 1970s, even early 1980s, had some popular appeal. The large demonstrations in the spring and the support that ordinary Koreans gave to them gave expression to the demand for change.



The embassy did a terrific job in keeping us informed as well as keeping the heat on Chun. Ambassador Lilley was terrific. These days there's a tendency to underestimate the importance of the "reporting" function and to see advocating of "doing" as separate from reporting. I agree political officers, in particular, have to be aggressive advocates of U.S. policies, implementers may be a better word in some countries. Nevertheless, instantaneous Internet access to media reports from around the world doesn't negate the importance of good reporting from our posts about what is happening and what it means for U.S. policy. We need to know what programs are working and what aren't. Indeed, the Internet information waterfall we're sitting under makes it even more important that we have political and economic officers on the spot backed up by post leadership giving us focused views on key issues. Washington also needs to know what posts are saying to different people and how they are reacting. Embassy Seoul did a superb job through the spring. You don't get that kind of thoughtful reporting that supports policy at crucial times from other agencies, let alone the media. It's a vital skill we develop in FSOs.

Q: Were we seeing signs of a government moving toward either a coup of some kind or rigging the elections?

KLOTH: Well, we were very afraid that the system that the government was going to use with a sort of stacked electoral college was not going to result in a democratic change. A huge concern was always about the Korean military and what was going on there. In spite of the long and close relationship between U.S. Forces Korea and the Korean military, we didn't have confidence in our ability to see a coup coming.

I knew a number of the people around town at CIA and DIA, so I convened at the Department a regular meeting, including very much our own INR, about once a month where we would sit down together and discuss our views of the situation. The goal was to ensure that information or analysis that one or the other of us were working on got around fast. Our meetings also ensured the intel agency working-level folks were up to date on policy-side thinking. The goal wasn't to pound anyone into place. We all knew each other too well. That wasn't going to happen, but to be sure we considered all the angles. We also operated on the rule that we could, indeed should, tell our bosses what we learned but not who said what. I think it was very effective in helping us to understand what we knew and didn't know as we went forward.



Another issue was press guidance. The Park and Chun governments had been quite skillful in manipulating United States' government statements to convey the impression that the U.S. supported in them. So in looking at how we did press guidance I felt and was able to persuade others that in tense situations press guidance should be shorter rather than longer. The longer a piece was the more opportunity you give people to cut and paste and create a position they want their people to think the U.S. has taken. Then when we go in to complain, they say, "Look, here are the words in your guidance." By having shorter press guidance you deprive them of that opportunity, although admittedly there are times when you want to obfuscate. Then longer may be better. While the Internet age gives access to our original statement, it also enables those not our friends to disseminate their version faster, so I suspect the principle still holds.

Q: I say this is very important because going back in history I've interviewed Marshall Greene. Back in, I think, '61, when Park Chung Hee had his coup and took over; most of our military and all was delighted with it. Marshall Green happened to be charge, the ambassador was absent, and Greene, the DCM, had no instructions, and went out and stated what our policy has always been: we support a democratic government. Well, the thing was a lot of our military and others in the United States, because it was a very weak democratic government at that time, were delighted that ROK General Park Chung Hee was taking over. Marshall Greene was left sort of swinging in the wind without much support. It's an interesting episode in our oral histories.

KLOTH: Throughout our long relationship with Korea that's been another underlying challenge. We have to make sure that our military as well as diplomats in our public statements as well as our other interactions with Koreans are sending the same message.

Q: Well how did things play out?

KLOTH: The demonstrations grew through the spring of 1987, and finally the government said, "Yes, we are going to have a direct election."

Roh Tae-woo, a former general and co-conspirator in the 1980 coup, ran for the government party and won the fall election. Our feeling was that the government decision in June was based on the political pressure of popular support for the demonstrators and on an accurate analysis of the Korean political scene. Kim Dae Jung and Kim Young Sam, the two chief opposition leaders who had suffered under Park Chung Hee and then under Chun Doo-hwan, both ran for President, splitting the opposition vote and ensuring Roh's victory. Roh also ran a serious campaign. I heard his speech at the U.S. National Press Club in the fall of 1987 that was a skillful political speech. I heard then former President Chun speak in New York in winter of 1988, and his speech was quite a contrast to Roh's of the fall.



Q: What was the difference?

KLOTH: Chun's was very tough minded. He was almost belligerent defending the coup makers' abuse of force in Kwangju in 1980, sort of they got what they asked for. In particular with regard to Kwangju he seemed to see the people in Kwangju who had opposed his coup, as having been if not in league with the North, clearly aiding and abetting, so argued the government's reaction was inevitable and had to be very tough. When Roh talked about Kwangju, he emphasized his regret, as I recall, that Koreans had wound up fighting with Koreans. He was much more astute, running as he was in a much more open and democratic election, than Chun ever had.

Q: How did we view Roh Tae-woo? Were we thinking of him as being a transitional figure or was this a continuation of a dictatorship by another name?

KLOTH: Roh Tae-woo had gotten elected by a democratic process because his two rivals divided the opposition vote. Whether if they had united, those who were running the Korean government would have tried in some way to subvert the election, stuff the ballot boxes, what have you, to make sure that Roh Tae-woo won, we'll never know. The two Kims couldn't bring themselves to uniting, so the regional nature of Korean politics meant the opposition vote was split, and Roh won.

What was the Reagan Administration's attitude toward Roh Tae-woo? Korean politicians over the years had often come to Washington, although Kim Young Sam didn't come often at all. He didn't seem to have much of an organization here. Kim Dae Jung and his supporters were very active. The opposition in Korea saw the Democratic Party in the United States as a close ally against the Korean dictatorship. The Republican Party tended to be very concerned with the Communist threat. Korean government officials and conservative politicians played skillfully on that. Also at a political level that wasn't directly related to dictatorship, the Republicans tended to see the right in South Korean politics as people who more in common political point of view, just as the Democrats tended toward and were cultivated by the Korean opposition.

So there seemed to be a sense of relief in the Reagan Administration that Roh Tae-woo had won both from the point of view of an orderly transition but also from the point of view of his being a "conservative." But make no mistake, the relief was also rooted in the fact that the process had been a democratic one.

Q: Was there any effort on our part...I'm speaking about with the embassy, State Department or our American military tell the two Kim's why don't you get your act together and let's not put another general in or were we just kind of saying well, let's let the chips lay where they fall?



KLOTH: It was obvious to us and our people in the embassy as well as the Korean press and the Korean body politic that both running meant both would lose. Koreans knew these two well enough to realize their ambition, not a Korean or U.S. government plot created that situation, so in the end it didn't undermine the legitimacy of the election.

Let me speak a little more about life of a desk officer. Part of my job was to talk with the Korean embassy as well as with any government or opposition representatives in Washington. I was encouraged reach out to NGOs concerned about Korean policies in the human rights area as well as to think tanks across the political spectrum. I did that, and also got to know key Congressional staffers like Stanley Roth, later assistant secretary, who was working for Congressman Steve Solarz, who had a very active role in East Asian policy in the House. There were various individuals on the Senate side too who were in touch.

That was in no means a criticism of the excellent embassy reporting, but we also felt that we needed to work with people who were concerned and active in the US, that we ought to be talking to them directly to ensure they understood Administration's views and we theirs. The expectation was that we would disagree on some issues but each side should know the other's position, so we were engaging on real issues, not misperceptions.

Q: Was there a significant group in Congress, I'm thinking particularly of the right wing who were close to our military? I was there in '76-'79. The general made these comments at the time sort of kicked out I can't think of it, but anyway...

KLOTH: Singlaub.

Q: Singlaub, yeah. Was there a sort of hard core within the staff and maybe particularly the Senate saying well we've got to support basically military rule?

KLOTH: No, my impression was that the Administration's policy had good support among the conservative community. I think there was a broad feeling among conservatives too that Korea had come of age.

Q: Okay, we have a democratic vote and Roh Tae-woo wins the general election. How generalish using my own term was the government?

KLOTH: As with Park Chung Hee, so with Chun Doo-hwan, the economic side, economic growth and development, were so important that Chun Doo-hwan continued to use civilian economic technocrats. Former military men were certainly given nice jobs, including ambassadorships, but economic results were number one.



Q: In many ways, I think Park Chung Hee set Korea on a course that has never deviated and that is really for real growth and despite all the general dictatorships and all they haven't messed with it. In fact, they've done the positive things on the economy, which turned Korea into a prosperous country.

KLOTH: Ambassador Dixie Walker, my first Ambassador as an FSO in 1982, said to me once that there were more American PhDs. in the Korean government than in the American government. It was a very technocratic approach to economic development. Chun and then Roh Tae-woo continued that. I returned in 1990, and, of course, there was the next round of democratization when Kim Young Sam joined the government party and won the presidency following Roh Tae-woo, but the economic technocrats continued to be the key policy and implementation people.

Q: One of the things back to just what you were saying that there has been much talk about the Chicago boys in Chile who went to the University of Chicago and came back and even under the dictatorship in Chile. They brought Chicago economics, which was very successful, but Korea has certainly benefited by people who went to the United States and took their business courses.

KLOTH: True, although Koreans value PhD's highly. The economic heavy hitters in government had doctorates by and large. That's one thing that has long fascinated me with the Korean case; they were trained in the United States and then came back to Korea. But clearly the model that they were using was the Japanese model the government planned and supported the development of private companies to implement growth. Resentment of Japanese colonialism was there, but they saw Japan rebuilding rapidly after WW II, so they used a Japanese-type model of government-planned development based on private firms.

Korean protectionism kept out U.S. firms and that became a trade issue in the 1980s when Korea shifted from a developing to a developed country. But every Korean I know saw that as first a policy of making sure Japanese didn't dominate their economy, a feeling very much fed by their experience as a colony of Japan before 1945.



The relationships after 1945 were, however, complex. The new generation got U.S. educations, but many who had been to schools in Korea during the colonial period had been to school with Japanese. These personal connections continued. I've talked to Japanese who went through high school in Seoul. They had Korean classmates. Through the 1980s and 1990s, they would have school reunions in Korea. So these kinds of connections were very much there and were a factor in business and government as Korea's economy developed. Another interesting aspect of the PhD-drive after 1945 was that Koreans came to the U.S. for graduate school in far, far greater numbers than went to Japan. Koreans were still impressed with a Tokyo University PhD, reportedly harder to get than one from Harvard, but a Korean I know who graduated from Tokyo U. said that he felt Koreans kept him at a distance at work; he was considered very smart but a bit tainted.

Q: In the Korean context high school classmates are very important even more than college.

KLOTH: Right. And Korean and Japanese are similar languages, so a Korean can learn Japanese relatively easily like an American learning Spanish.

Q: What about, again from your perspective, on the desk, the China connection, what was happening?

KLOTH: Our focus was primarily on Korea. South Korea and China had no formal relations. We, however, encouraged not only China but also the Russians to have discussions and to develop relations with the South Koreans. I think the Chinese, in particular, were interested in South Korea as an economic growth model and potential partner. China too had suffered from colonialism, especially Japanese colonialism, and by the 1980s, Korea was clearly a model of successful economic development, especially when compared to North Korea, China's erstwhile ally. South Korea had a lot of lessons to teach. By the early 1990s, China was willing to establish diplomatic relations with Seoul. So was Moscow.

Q: Were we just sort of letting things...that's up to them or did we have any policy in that way?

KLOTH: We encouraged the two to talk and to build a relationship with South Korea. For the Korea desk the challenge was how to draw North Korea out of its shell and into peaceful interaction with the South and the international community, including the U.S.

Q: Well how about who had responsibility for reporting on North Korea and how was that working out?



KLOTH: Our external relations officer in Seoul was the one who followed North Korea, as I recall, and we weren't getting much. There were few defectors from North Korea and remarkably little information coming out, if you compare it back to the old Soviet Union or Eastern Europe.

Q: Well, at least we had representation in the Soviet Union.

KLOTH: Right. But we had none in the North, so we weren't going to have reporting from FSOs.

Q: Would there be sort of gathering together once every few months or something on what were North Korea's intentions and how things stand and that sort of thing with the military and CIA and everybody else?

KLOTH: Probably, but I had focused on South Korea and was plenty busy.

In the summer of '88, I moved to Japan desk to work on trade. At that time, U.S.-Japan trade issues were highly contentious and had been for over a decade. When I first came to Washington in '80, at seminar at the University of Maryland one weekend, I heard a UAW rep, Ford lobbyist, and Toyota lobbyist discuss the problems of the U.S. auto industry and its demands for the U.S. government to stop Japanese imports into the US. People asked the Ford and the UAW reps if limiting competition would just enable the U.S. auto industry to continue to develop unpopular products and so take the pressure off it to become competitive in the U.S. and world markets. I remember one or the other of them said very frankly, "That's a legitimate, but the political pressure from inside the industry and the union is such that we will demand the U.S. government to do it."

Predictably, of course, the "voluntary" limits on Japanese cars led the Japanese auto industry to bring in higher value vehicles which were head to head with even more of the U.S., industries' models. If you're limited in number of units, you want higher profits per unit, so that Japanese reaction was easy to anticipate and led to the price of Japanese cars going higher without lowering demand because Americans were willing to pay the premium for a better product. The U.S. industry did bring some better products like the Taurus, but two decades later only Ford management seems competitive.

The upside for U.S. workers is that major Japanese, Korean and German makers build cars here. The irony is that in the late '70s, though, a Japanese banker told me that U.S. trade pressure gave Japanese auto firms the excuse to override "keep-jobs-in-Japan" politicians and bureaucrats and build plants here move that made economic sense arguing that Japanese firms did so only "to escape U.S. protectionism."



At any rate, the political antagonism to the Japanese, who were running protectionist policies, make no mistake, was high. When I moved from Korea desk to Japan desk, a Congressional staffer I knew well warned me, "Ted, our relationship is going to change. Don't take it personally, and you've been really helpful to me and my Senator. But the feeling up here on the Hill, the antagonism over these trade issues means that when you move to Japan desk, and we talk, it's not going to be in the consultative kind of way that we've talked up to now. The nickname on the Hill for State's Japan desk is 'the second Japanese embassy.'"

I could understand. The U.S. was running a large trade deficit with the Japanese, and the Japanese had continued protectionist their policies developed after World War II to rebuild their economy. By the '70s and '80s, Japanese industries were internationally competitive. The auto industry comes to mind but others such as ship building and electronics were doing very, very well, so the protections that had been erected became an obvious economic issue in terms of U.S. products being able to have access to the Japanese market in the same way their products had access to our market.

It was a complex picture because there were some restrictions that were pure politics. The government party depended on rural voters, so there were zero rice imports, not a big U.S. export, but beef was, and beef imports were tightly controlled.

There were also other issues such as standards which were kind of a second level of obstacles to foreign importers. The issue was whether or not, for instance, safety standards for construction materials were drawn up in such a way that manufacturers in Japan had an unfair advantage. Japanese standards were set in centimeters. A board needed to be X by X centimeters to meet code. The issue was whether an X by X inch board from the U.S. could bear the same load. If you specified in terms of load-bearing rather than linear measurement, it was better for U.S. saw mills, and Japanese consumers. Japan demanded clinical trials in Japan for medicines.

Standards got the U.S. government's attention as an issue from around 1980, when a U.S. baseball bat manufacturer complained to our economic/commercial officer in Osaka that his metal bats were "not up to code in Japan" because the code had been deliberately set to ensure only Japanese bats would qualify. He had done all the right things in Japan in terms of coming to Japan and building relationships with potential purchasers and having a good product at a good price. The American bats did not meet Japanese specifications because they were not milled on the inside, which made no difference to safety or performance but was a requirement of the Japanese standard, and there was strong suspicion, given the collaboration between Japanese government and industry, that this had been set to keep U.S. bats out.



Further investigation revealed that the standards issue was a big one for many U.S. products, even when the Japanese bureaucrats were not trying to be deliberately protectionist. They too often set specifications in terms of form rather than function. Other issues such as the relationships between the banks and the large Japanese companies emerged. Negotiations started with the Japanese on a full range of these complex problems, including the value of the Yen.

Q: What piece of the action did you have?

KLOTH: Well, I had automobiles, construction, and others, including the so-called large scale retail store law. This law was developed to protect mom and pop stores in Japan, which were the largest number of stores and so the largest number of voters, from competition with Japanese department stores, but also hurt U.S. firms like Toy 'R U.S. trying to enter the market. There were similar, it turns out, laws in places like Germany. We never had American companies complain about them, just as we never had American companies complain about the German auto industry. After World War II, the Europeans had let U.S. firms back in, and Japan had kept them out.

Q: Sure, the Ford was producing the Taurus and all sorts of ...

KLOTH: Later I discovered Australia is highly restrictive on imports of automobiles, but Ford and GM long ago opened plants in the country. Restrictions on autos not made in Australia served their interests too.

Q: From your perspective were you able to make, you being obviously part of the team, make any progress and how did you deal with this?

KLOTH: U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) is the one who leads the American team, although that office sometimes agrees to a delegation of work. Department of Commerce, for instance, led a team trying to open the Japanese government construction market to internationally competitive bidding

In the midst of my time on Japan desk, we had a transition from Reagan to Bush I. In terms of watching Secretary Baker and his team move into the Department, one would have thought that would have been seamless, given one Republican was replacing another. In fact, I recall it as being a time of some stress for those at levels closer to the secretary than I was as a desk officer, but that stress was passed on down.



Secretary Baker moved into the Department rather quickly, as I recall. He had an office on the first floor, the transition office, and people were very favorably impressed both by the team members they met and by the new Secretary-to-be's own demeanor. I remember our OMS (Office Management Specialist) came back one day very excited. She had been in the lunch line, and the Secretary designate had been right behind her.

When the transition actually took place, although Secretary Baker had a very sharp team he brought from Treasury where he had been under Reagan, the seventh floor (where the Secretary has his office) seemed uninterested in much of the Department's work. Only a few issues like Russia interested them, so no guidance on many issues was coming out. Morale went down.

In EAP, however, we had a new Deputy Assistant Secretary for economic affairs, Robert Fauvre from Treasury, so we in EAP/J felt we were in the loop on the new U.S.-Japan Structural Impediments Initiative (SII). Treasury developed the SII as a comprehensive approach to move beyond the individual item by item negotiations that seemed endless. In addition to talking to the Japanese about individual issues brought up by individual companies, we would look at six areas where the structure of the Japanese system impeded foreign companies coming in. They included a broad range of issues from the relationships between companies and banks to the distribution system (defined as everything customs to the large-scale department store law) to price differentials.

Price differentials, led by Commerce, turned out to be a great one from the public relations point of view. You could often buy Japanese products cheaper in the United States than in Japan, but U.S. products would be more expensive in Japan than in the US. Up until the early '70s, Japanese aware of this thought it was a necessary measure to keep consumption low and investment high. Further, as a resource poor nation Japan had to import things like oil and pay for them in dollars gained through exports. This was the development model they had and was widely accepted.

By the late '80s, Japan had been doing very well for decades, and Japanese were starting to do things like travel with families. They wanted a reward for their hard work and thought they had earned it. When a Commerce Department and Japanese counterpart survey was done, and the results got into the Japanese media, the Japanese public and media response was, "Yeah, why are we paying so much more for this or that?"

It was not all the result of policy to make imports more expensive. When we looked, for example, at the distribution system, all these small mom and pop stores need more frequent deliveries. So, of course, there is a cost for that. Our argument was that the restrictions of the large-scale department store law made it very difficult for a new large store like Toys 'R Us to set up in Japan and bring goods at lower prices to Japanese consumers. There were other issues too, the question of how long it took to come through the ports to get through all the customs and other clearances.



Q: Looking at it did you find that the customs clearances were just trying to stall rather than to do what one should do, necessary operations or a lot of other things like that?

KLOTH: Well, we found Japanese Customs was an unexpected ally. The Japanese Customs did not have the latest information technology and was way behind U.S. Customs not only in the technology but in the use of technology. For example, they had not developed as sophisticated set of risk-evaluating algorithms, including input of intelligence information, as U.S. Customs had. Japanese Customs realized that their government's agreement to our "demand" for faster processing could force the Finance Ministry to fund modernization of their data-processing system.

Q: If you examine these two different systems, this is sort of the American perspective in reading about this in the various newspaper accounts. You have the feeling that the American system is basically practical; the Japanese was designed to keep things out. I mean did you come away with this impression?

KLOTH: True. But other factors were also at work. In Fukuoka the head of the local office of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (at the time called MITI) said, "Japanese have much more of a sense that the government is responsible for the quality of products that they buy as well as for the organization of a host of other things in society. It's a big problem for the government, if something comes in that turns out to be problematic."

Listening to Japanese officials in countless meetings, I realized that in many areas they were already much more worried about Chinese than U.S. imports. China in the 1980s was just gaining steam, but the Japanese were quite prescient in seeing quality issues coming. Look at U.S. reaction to lead in the paint of kids toys from China! For example, if Japan accepted U.S. test results for pharmaceuticals or even construction materials, they would open themselves up to great pressure in the future when China wanted to send exports to Japan. Lately Americans have been criticizing a lack of import testing here.

Fundamentally, the Japanese were frustrated by our attitude. "When we sell you our products, we find out what the U.S. requirement is, and we manufacture to the requirement. Now why don't your firms manufacture to our requirement?"

Our manufacturers responded, "Because you restrict our ability to sell in quantity in many different ways, so it's too expensive."

Starts too sound like the chicken and the egg in some aspects, but in the end the U.S. is a bigger market, so foreign companies are go meet our standards.



Q: Were the Japanese and the European Community demanding kind of the same things or had our trade gotten so sophisticated with the European Community that it wasn't an issue?

KLOTH: We had some issues with Europe, but nothing of the scale of friction with Japan. There were issues, for example, European government support for Aerobus. In the case of Japan, there were so many issues. It was so broad and so deep that it was a major negative element in the relationship and very serious.

So many members of Congress had industries in their districts that felt they were unfairly disadvantaged trying to export to Japan, which was by the '80s a large potential market. Certainly the beef, a highly symbolic issue, and the autos were infuriating for many Americans. Japanese would talk about the "cultural" importance of rice to Japan. In fact, the United States was not going to export very much rice. The Japanese were much more concerned about rice coming in from Southeast Asia. Americans could make both a "cultural" as well as economic argument about autos or beef for America. The political chemistry was bad.

Q: Okay, you've got our special trade representative who's the lead person. What from your perspective was the role of the State Department in the Japanese trade negotiations relations?

KLOTH: We worked closely with USTR and our embassy because there was no USTR representative in Tokyo. At a larger policy level our DAS in '88 Bill Pease, who was replaced by Bob Fauvre, said well. Our job at State was to be sure that one, issues identified as targets for negotiations with the Japanese were of real importance to the United States, given that the U.S.-Japan relations were critical to U.S. security as well as economic interests. Two, as the prime U.S. experts on Japan and the dynamics of Japanese government and business, the Japan desk and our embassy had to work actively to develop strategies that led to real results for U.S. business, and to minimize the kind of nasty political posturing, and huffing and puffing that some in DC agencies were tempted into simply to score points in the U.S. domestic process. Trade fights hurt our relations with Japan, a close ally. We had to make sure the benefits were worth the price we paid. I found the biggest challenge to your diplomatic skills was working in the Washington interagency process, not foreign capitals.

I guess my own quick and dirty on trade issues is that I'm hard pressed to think of a trade or an economic issue that is really an economic issue. They're political issues. In general, tariffs or quotas whether in Japan or the U.S. are the result of political decisions. The United States does not restrict sugar imports into our country from abroad because it makes economic sense, unless you are a sugar crop producer.



Q: Let me ask an indiscreet question. You were involved with negotiations on high visibility subjects. Leaks are often an issue when stakes are high. Did you ever leak? If not, why not?

KLOTH: No. At State in '82, when I joined, there were two big things on the minds of the people running our A-100 incoming officers' basic course. They were mid-level and upper mid-level officers, an O-3 and an O-1. One was the question of leaking. These officers, if they had not been in Vietnam, had certainly been in the Vietnam era Foreign Service. They and more than a few senior officials, who addressed us, emphasized that you have an obligation within the walls of the Department to put forward vigorously the position that you think the U.S. should follow. But once a decision has been made on what that U.S. position would be, your job is to advance that position. That includes defending it on the Hill and defending it to the media.

If you disagree with it, then you have a number of options. One is to just proceed forward. If you feel that your disagreement is at a level where you cannot in good personal conscience continue to defend it, then you should either seek another job in the Department or you should resign. Those seemed reasonable terms of employment to me.

Further, while there are different motives for and results of leaks, my experience was that in most cases with the issues I worked over my career, leakers were trying to subvert agreed policy or gain advantage outside the process when their arguments were unpersuasive in the process. That struck me as sleazy. If you don't like the policy for whatever reason, move to a different job or quit, then go public if you're so moved. Maybe I was just lucky; perhaps deliberations on the issues that I worked on didn't produce a result so disagreeable that I felt tempted to leak.

The other thing that was much on their minds was the Iran hostage taking, because this was March 1982, so there were people in the training world who knew people who had been hostages. Bruce Langdon came and spoke to our group about the Middle East and about being a hostage. It was also made very clear to us that the U.S. government was not going to negotiate for our release, and that meant that might increase the chances of your being killed or held a long time. The Department wanted everybody in the class to think this through and be sure you really wanted to be part of the service.

Q: In 1990 where did you go?



KLOTH: After finishing my tour on Japan desk in 1990, I went back to Seoul. I was in the embassy for three years as the head of the internal political section. In the portfolio were relations with Korean politicians and the National Assembly, in particular, and relations with university academics and NGOs, even the media. I wasn't trying to do the work of the public affairs section, but to better understand the dynamics of Korean politics and society by talking with people who had a broad range of contacts and perspectives. I also had a mandate from our front office to be proactive in ensuring the politicians and others I met with understood U.S. policy. Koreans might agree or disagree, and the goal was to increase the number of those who agreed, or at least, if they disagreed, understood our policies. Too often politicians and the Korean media out of ignorance or for their own political purposes portrayed the choices as zero-sum "U.S. wins; Korea loses."

Trade issues had become big, for example. The Uruguay Round was entering a critical stage, so Koreans would ask me about that. North Korea was also heating up and Koreans had a variety of opinions about what South Korean and U.S. policy should be. As a political officer I had two jobs: to advocate U.S. positions and to report how local politics and how that process would affect our interests.

Q: Who was our ambassador at the time?

KLOTH: Don Gregg was ambassador in 1990.

Q: Okay, let's talk about the Seoul time. You'd been away for a while and they had a real election. Talk about the changed political environment that you were dealing with.

KLOTH: Korean politics and the way the government operated were much more open and democratic, reflecting the new dynamics of Korean society and Korea's economy. Koreans were living better; wages had taken a big jump in '88 as part of the democratization process, which capped the economic development of the '70s and 80s.

The jump in car ownership was a highly visible symbol of those changes. When I first went there in 1969, only affluent people could afford to cars. I was startled in 1990, going out to Seoul National University to visit some professor friends to see row after row of brand new cars parked on campus. One professor began by saying, "I bet you noticed all those new cars. They aren't owned by professors but by students. Dad or mom gave their kids a car when they got into SNU, because that's a big deal. The students often maintain the cars using the money they earn tutoring high school kids (a college students' usual part-time job with a long tradition). In Korea that is very lucrative and always has been. Back in the days when Koreans were much poorer, I certainly knew more than a few students of very, very modest means who funded their college educations by tutoring. I'm sure many still do, but today some use the money for cars."



Q: You might just mention about the sort of hierarchical university system.

KLOTH: If you ask Koreans to name the universities, to rank order them, everyone will start with Seoul National University. Korea has public and private universities. Yonsei or Korea Universities, private schools, probably come next. Koreans will go down a list with much less variation than in the U.S.. After all, it's a smaller country, but it also has a tradition of rankings that is strong. Where you go pretty much determines a person's upper and lower limits in terms of future jobs and more.

Thinking back to the bad old days of the Foreign Service where if you didn't go to the Ivy League, you could apply but your odds of being accepted didn't seem to have been very...

Q: When I came in 1955, it was pretty obvious that a significant number of the senior people had gone to Princeton for some reason. Yale and Princeton seemed to be much more...

KLOTH: The big feeders?

Q: Well, they were government-oriented which was more than Harvard was.

KLOTH: Yeah, in the mid-'90s, I was in the Equal Opportunity class for managers at FSI. One of the old hands mentioned that when he'd entered State as an FSO in the mid-'60s, he was a beneficiary of the "first equal opportunity program" at the Department. Congress asked why so many FSOs were Ivy Leaguers and so few graduates of state universities.

Q: When I came in 1955, there was a call from Congress for mass infusion of Main Streeters. In a way having been working on this oral history program with people who are results of this, one of the things that is hidden is that the GI Bill and the post World War II group that came in really came from quite a variety of places. In fact, in interviewing people who reached ambassadorial rank or the equivalent, the great majority, which still holds today but it's obviously on its last legs, is that the parents of the people I'm interviewing were probably not college graduates. That's a social thing that is changing.



KLOTH: You look back before World War II; I think there were sixty independent countries because, of course, this was the colonial era. In turn, the Foreign Service had what 300-400 people or something like that, very small, which also reflected that if you had an ambassador in every capital, you would have only sixty ambassadors; then you would have consul generals in some of the colonies as well as cities in the home countries. There was a consul general in Seoul, but these were very small operations. Inside capitals and out we certainly didn't have all the programs, including assistance and security cooperation programs, we have now. Then after World War II, there was a burst of growth in independent countries and aid programs and so in our overseas missions and people to staff them; my father recalled that before he left the Navy in 1947, the word went out encouraging officers to apply to the Foreign Service.

Q: Absolutely.

KLOTH: Maybe, even a suggestion that if you were a commissioned officer you would be commissioned or that maybe you would skip the exam...I don't know exactly how it worked and he couldn't remember, but he said that they were looking hard for people.

Q: If you are looking at the structure of the Foreign Service, including our embassies and all, it was basically done in 1946 and was basically based on the Navy system. A principle officer, executive officer, DCM, Gunnery, Engine...

KLOTH: Various section chiefs.

Q: Section chiefs, so it's a Navy system, and it was done by people who were in the Navy, not in Navy professionals probably, but this is where it came from.

KLOTH: Right, the organization needed to expand and to broaden its base. There was the geographical distribution that we were just talking about because after all the Ivy League schools are all in the Northeast; Penn is the furthest south and that's above the Mason-Dixon Line. Then, of course, women officers, if they married, they had to resign!

Q: Yeah, up to about '72.



KLOTH: In an effort to get more diversity, the exam has also changed over the last four decades too. I took it my senior in college in '68. I just missed passing. My recollection was regretting I hadn't taken a diplomatic history course because it clearly seemed very much written by and for people who had. I then went off in other directions. When I took it in the early '80s, it was very wide open. People ask me what to do to prepare for it. "Read your newspapers every day."

Q: Well, anyway back to Korea.

KLOTH: Back to Korea. In 1990, Korea was very different. Folks were more prosperous, and they were reaping the rewards of their hard work. I mentioned the cars at Seoul National University; obviously that is the higher end. But in Ulsan, with the big Hyundai shipyard, higher end blue collar workers were going around on motorbikes. If you wandered around the back streets of Seoul's Yongdungp'o, there were a lot of small machine tool shops. These were one or two guys with a power drill making parts, perhaps auto parts, as sub-contractors, very humble kinds of places. But you'd see TV aerials on roof tops. People were well fed and clothed. In '69, you would see poor people, clearly not as well fed, but also wearing cast off military uniforms. By the 1990s, people were wearing work clothes that were not cast off military uniforms, so all these little things were signs of a better quality of life. I don't mean there was no poverty or that working conditions weren't often terrible, but by the 1990s Koreans felt confident enough in their future to worry about things like the environment.

With a more open political system, there were TV investigative reports about things like pollution, water pollution, industrial waste being dumped into the river systems. Prior to this time, a story occasionally might pop up on such problems, and then it would disappear - censored. University professors and folks in NGOs told me that the government didn't want to hear about pollution in the '70s and the early '80s. Most people were just focused on living a little better, so it wasn't a case of censorship bucking much popular sentiment. Rapid economic growth was accepted widely as the number one priority or maybe number two after being sure the North Koreans wouldn't start another war.

Talking to people in Korea's business world, I discovered that many companies were and had been thinking ahead. If, say, a company put up a brand new TV factory, it would put in anti-pollution equipment, because it was cheaper to do so at the start, than five years later if government policy changed. Guys running the big companies and even many medium-sized ones could see change coming. They traveled on business and were well informed. Ironically, I was told when I visited one plant in the early '90s, the government told the manager not to use his anti-pollution equipment because it increased electricity consumption. They didn't care if he was willing to pay. Limited supply worried them as demand jumped with all the new TVs, refrigerators, washing machines and computers.



Q: Well, Korea under Park Chung Hee government had made a great effort to pass the goodies that were available down to the farmers and all, as opposed to so many other places where the farmers were made to sacrifice to the city folk. Was that still going on?

KLOTH: Well, they did, and certainly in terms of trade things like rice imports or beef imports continued to be contentious issues. We'd negotiated with them and opened their system relatively speaking, but in the '90s rice was a very hot issue because the Uruguay Round was going to require concessions. I found that the embassy internal sections' job was shifting. Up till '88, it was very much focused on political reporting and advocacy for democratization and human rights. There were three officers in my internal politics section.

By '91, the democratization, labor and human rights situation was much improved. The North Korea nuclear issue was a major concern. We only had one officer on the external affairs account who covered that. He was getting swamped by '91, so we moved one of the officers out my section to work with him. I would argue our internal section was becoming "normal." You'd follow the ins and outs of domestic politics and advocate with politicians and others on key issues like security issues, trade and U.S. policy toward North Korea where U.S. policy was getting plenty of criticism from right and left in South Korea.

Q: Was there a difference between the politician of the 1970s and the 1990s as far as almost structurally? Were they more independent, district oriented or how?

KLOTH: In the '70s, when I was in Peace Corps and a grad student, I really didn't know politicians at all. I, of course, knew plenty of Koreans interested in politics, but it was a dictatorship. In '82, when I first went back in the consular section, through friends, I did meet a number. So my '70s memories are basically newspapers and impressions. Korea's political parties, including the government party, were kept on a tight leash.

The president of Korea was and still is a very powerful figure. The Korean bureaucracy is very large and powerful too but takes its cues from on high, in part because of all the apparatus that was built to develop Korea. Seoul is also the center of the universe: the capital of government; the center of business, academe and the media.



The Korean assemblymen of the ruling party, of course, are plugged into the ruling party, and therefore have more power and influence than the minority, but the Assembly as a legislative body reflects what various segments of society are thinking. In terms of the individual politicians as has been true for a long time certainly in the '70s and the '60s, there is a tradition that roots parties in regions of the country. If you come from the Cholla's, then you are going to be in one party, and if you are from the North or South Kyongsung in another. The roots are not just political. Presidents Park, Chun and Roh were from the Kyongsung area, but social too. There are historic prejudices at work too. A Korean acquaintance's girl friend was forced to break up with him, when her family found out he was from a different region.

Koreans are smart and very competitive. When democratization came, while the regional biases remained key to electoral behavior, political candidates in Seoul had to work hard to win because the populace came from all over the country. In the 1990s, a new generation also came of voting age, and in the 21st century the Internet opened the system further. But you could see in 1990 that it was a New Korea, economically, politically and in terms of society.

We shouldn't leave my job in Seoul without noting that a major part of my job was to watch developments as Korea approached its '92 presidential election. All the candidates were civilian politicians. We were worried that conservative hard-liners might try to carry out their threats to disrupt the process, because Kim Young Sam, a long-time opposition leader, had merged his party with President Roh's party, and was the united party's candidate. Since Kim Jong Pil, who led another regional group, also joined the ruling party, the demographics assured YS would win, and he did, so there was an orderly, democratic transition to a completely civilian-led government, quite an accomplishment when you look at struggles in other countries around the world. Another remarkable feature was the lack of revenge taking against the KCIA or police operatives or even those involved in the 1980 coup, except for eventual trials of Chun and Roh. People wanted to move on and beyond the past.

Q: What about the role of women by that time, 1990, when you got out there? When I was there in the late '70s we benefited greatly by the fact that the embassy would hire married women because married women even graduates of Ewe and other major fine universities couldn't get jobs. What was happening by 1990?

KLOTH: Let's make one point that even in '69, when I went there in Peace Corps the issue is sort of an issue between college educated or middle and upper class women and working class women. In 1969 when you went into Dongdaemon market, many of the stalls were run by women; food stores run by women, those kinds of things. We often forget...

Q: They were married so that....



KLOTH: Certainly among all groups in society, the pattern was that a woman, and males for that matter too, should get married in their early twenties, and their parents would find them a spouse. In fact, the parent's job or one of the jobs was to find them a spouse.

That had a long tradition and up through mid-twentieth century, the bride and groom might see each other for the first time at the wedding ceremony. But Korea in the sixties was changing. Young women after college would often go and work. I think middle and upper class parents at least some parents thought it was a good idea. The young women would accumulate some money and would learn about the world outside the house, even if the vision was to quit as soon as they married. The primo jobs were in the big companies such as Hyundai. One of my students said to me that her parents felt that the experience would help her be a better mother. Their hope was that her comments like this were invariably about being a better mother for raising boys, not girls - would go to work for Hyundai or one of these other big companies. His mom would know what it took because she'd worked there. Mom's job to run the house and see to it that the kids studied hard and got the education they needed. Koreans' view was that stay-at-home Mom was a full time job and a very important one.

There was a lot of tension too with parents because on the other hand, there was recognition that people were going to meet people of the opposite sex where they work, so that's another reason for daughters going to good companies. They would meet a bright young man at a good company and make a match. Nevertheless, parents on both sides still expected a veto, and "meetings" with a group, not individual dates, was considered the preferred venue for young people to get to know each other. I remember my grandmother telling me that Indian parents thought American parents criminally negligent in letting two young people who knew little of the world decide to marry each other. Korean parents felt the same way. Marriage was too big a decision to be left to the fancies of youth.

Well, by the 1990s, things, and this is a kind of a moving scenario and some families moved faster than others, things were changing. Many young women wanted to go on and do more. There were also new opportunities, even in government, including the foreign ministry, and a few women politicians. But I think probably more significant, again I don't know the statistics, but I suspect more significant was an increase of small business opportunities, of small shops, dress shops, for women to be independent even after marriage.

We should also note that more Koreans were studying abroad and then returning to work in Korea. It began to change in the '70s, first because university jobs in the States became tougher to get, so Koreans finishing PhDs a hard time finding jobs in the U.S. And at the same time Korea had developed and also had a government policy of incentives, things like building apartment houses for the Korean Development Institute, so that when people came back, they could look to a more comfortable life. By the '80s, the U-turners were increasing and even more by the '90s. So that was a significant change, which reflected the new opportunities in Korea.



Q: 1992 and I would like to talk about was there a more discernable, maybe it's always been there, but anti-Americanism or at least on some issues? And the roll of think tanks of the universities; was there a distinct chattering class? And also although you weren't dealing with external matters but you were dealing with internal, was there a change in attitude internally toward North Korea and Japan, China maybe, the Soviet Union just disappeared or was disappearing.

KLOTH: Right, Korea was establishing relations, diplomatic relations with China and Russia.

Q: How was this affecting Korea internally, and did you see where Korean-Americans having an influence developing enough clout or what have you in the United States and those sorts of things?

KLOTH: On China and Russia, not a few Koreans seemed to believe that Korea's better relations with those countries would upset the United States. Usually that idea came from the many folks with a zero-sum approach to international relations. I spent more than a little time trying to explain to people in all the political parties that the U.S. had long urged such better relations.

The first sign I saw of the growing influence of the U.S. Korean-American community was among some of our visiting Congressmen from areas with significant numbers of constituents from that community. I remember one Congressman who, in addition to a very busy round of official calls I had arranged as his control officer, had a separate schedule arranged by some influential Korean-Americans in his district. He was completely exhausted by the time he left. It was a bit of a scramble for me too, trying to ensure the two schedules meshed, because I only learned of the second program when he arrived at the airport.

Q: Back to 1990s Korean politics, was the U.S. over confident in its trade policies and pressure on Korea to open its markets? Wouldn't that feed perfectly natural but latent anti-Americanism? I mean after all we'd been in Korea for over 50 years sort of throwing our weight around, there had to be a very strong residue or remnant or whatever you want to say of anti-Americanism?



KLOTH: Well, it's always been there, and it's about Koreans having control of their own fate at one level. There are various different levels to it. Korea was colonized by the Japanese. That was particularly galling to them not only because of the brutality of the colonization, but also because they had been an independent country with their own king, and they traditionally looked down on the Japanese. Koreans felt they were closer to China, which was kind of the center of the universe, and at times in history Koreans even felt they were protecting "real" Chinese culture as, for example, during the Manchu period. (The Manchus had conquered China.) It was doubly galling and frustrating for Koreans to find themselves colonized by Japanese, people they looked down on.

Depending on the U.S. military aid after the Korean War made Koreans grateful but also resentful. For many, Korea was not yet fully independent yet. These feelings were there in the late '60s when I first went to Korea, but with a controlled media and political system, the Korean government only allowed criticism of U.S. policy when it wanted to. The opening of the political system after 1988 meant that Koreans could publicly express feelings that they had in the past but couldn't discuss openly in the media. So for some Americans I think this was very shocking and a radical change. But I think for most of us who'd lived as Peace Corps volunteers outside the walled embassy and military compounds, it was no surprise.

Q: You were in Korea from 1990 until when?

KLOTH: I went to Pusan after three years in Seoul in 1993. Actually, I'd asked to extend a year in Seoul. The dilemma, as you may know, for LDP positions in Korea...

Q: LDP, Language Designated Positions, is you have somebody waiting in line.

KLOTH: The issue is for hard languages, the replacements are assigned three years in advance. That meant when I arrived in Seoul, my job was on the bid list for filling within months of my arriving at post. I had to decide right away whether to extend or have somebody assigned and the position filled. So when I got to Seoul, I talked to my new boss about extending for a fourth year because my wife had located a job she liked. Since we had just started working together, my boss not unreasonably said, "Let's wait until the bidding season starts."

As things turned out, he came to me not long after and asked if I'd like to go to run the consulate in Pusan instead of staying in Seoul. My wife and I decided that would be fun; I'd never lived outside of Seoul and neither had she. But because I would have been already three years in Korea, I asked if I could just go for two instead of the usual three, lest I hurt by future promotion prospects by spending too much time in one country. Everyone thought that would be fine.



So in 1993, I headed south for our consulate in Pusan as principal officer. You may recall at that time budget cuts were really hitting the Foreign Service, a periodic occurrence that seems to happen at least once a decade. One consequence although I'm not sure what year or years it happened in the '90s was that State didn't hire any new Foreign Service officers, a short sighted policy we are still paying for. The budget cuts were hitting hard constituent posts hard too, in '92 or early '93; inspectors had come through to look at the embassy as well as at Pusan. When they characterized it as only "very desirable," my reading of that was the post was in danger of closure.

Q: What was the rationale for having a post there? When I was there in the late-'70s Pusan had a USIA post and Kevin was the USIA officer but there was no...

KLOTH: Well, we had USIA posts in Taegu, Pusan and Kwangju. In 1980 there was not only the most famous anti-government action in Kwangju, but also in '79 and '80, large demonstrations in Pusan and southeast Korea as well. So after the Kwangju rising, the Department decided to augment the USIA officer in southeast Korea with a State officer who would report on what was happening outside the capital because USIS officers "didn't do reporting," a silly policy if ever there was one.

At first it was, I've forgotten what they called it, it wasn't an American presence post, a term they use today, but there was some other euphemism. Then after a State officer had been there a couple of years, he recommended they upgrade it to a consulate because at that time the Japanese and the Taiwan governments had representatives in Pusan. The South Korea government was not recognized by Beijing, so they had neither an ambassador nor any other representatives in Korea from Beijing. So it was in something like '84 or maybe '85, when Pusan became a consulate. It had a principal officer and one consular officer, and was to be a listening post outside the capital. With democratization, that function was less important, and, when I went down there, I felt, and was told, that the post needed to justify its existence by shifting to more representational and commercial work, along the lines of consulates in Japan and other developed countries.

I should also note that Pusan did consular work: visas for Koreans, passports for Americans and other assistance for Americans. The most Americans in the district were military connected, but there was a small business and educator community.

Q: Can you characterize the Pusan area or was this a particularly interesting post? Was there a reason for Pusan other than being a port?



KLOTH: It is a large port, the largest in Korea, and the district included both Kyongsung provinces and Taegu, a major city. You had a large part of Korea's new industry there. Over in Pohang was the steel mill; Ulsan was where Hyundai had their shipyard and their auto plant. In Changwon there were various hi-tech and the new aviation parts industries. Masan had what they called an export zone where Korean manufacturers could bring in raw materials duty free or with a minimum of customs hassles, manufacture with them and export finished goods. It was an important farming region as well and so a good location in terms of business as well as politics and other activities that were going on. The alternative probably would have been Kwangju, but it didn't have the transport, commercial or U.S. military activities that Pusan did as Korea's major port.

Before I went down in '93, the DCM told me that he thought the post should either expand or shrink but wasn't sure which. Grow with more staff because there was a lot of visa business and potential commercial work down there. Or shrink which meant it would be cut to one official had a vice consul to process visas.

At that time, Pusan was processing visas for Koreans. With only one vice consul, it was all based on review of documents. Applications were brought in by travel agents. If somebody needed an interview, we sent them up to Seoul. The embassy itself was processing a large number of visas by having travel agents bring them in too; these were short-term visitor tourist or business visas. The prosperity in Korea as well as the increase in the Korean-American population in the U.S. had combined over the course of the '80s to greatly increase the number of Koreans who wanted to visit the U.S., and they needed visas. Since the embassy was unable to expand the size of its consular section commensurately, they reached tilt with ever longer lines outside the embassy, which had a very detrimental effect on the view most Koreans had of our embassy.

After all, as they say so often in the consular course, the only contact most Koreans will ever have with anybody from the embassy is with the person who is behind the visa window. So the embassy decided in the late 1980s to have the travel agents bring in the tourist visa applications. They would be processed through the computer watch-list system, of course, and then an officer would review them and decide who needed to be interviewed and who could be issued a visa immediately. That was the same system we used in Japan before the visa waiver program.

Now this was pre-9/11, of course, so the issue of terrorism was not at the top of peoples' minds, and certainly not when it came to Koreans. Visa processing in Pusan was very popular. People who didn't need an interview got their visas faster. We knew the area, so we were able to give added value to adjudication compared to an officer in Seoul. Occasionally, Seoul would ask us to double check on somebody or on a firm.



At any rate, the inspectors rejected that system. They felt that it undermined the integrity of the visa processing. So unfortunately for me, one of the consequences of stopping the system was that Pusan no longer did visas, except for local Korean officials or other special cases, and they pulled my consular officer out to reinforce the visa line in Seoul; so when my vice consul transferred out after a year, Pusan went to a one-man post. A few years later it was closed, although I understand there is now an "American-interest" post operating.

The consequence in terms of the view of the consulate and the U.S. in the district was immediate. At every speech and every reception after the end of visa services was announced, the lead question was, "Why are you doing this? Don't you know what a hassle it is to go to Seoul? Don't you want Korean businessmen to do business in the U.S.? Don't you want people to see their families? I thought Korea and Koreans were important to America?"

I did have a bit of success in trying to ease the blow. When we knew this was coming, I immediately went to the mayor and the head of the chamber of commerce and the head of the travel agent group, and told them what we were going to do. I personally went to the presidents of the local newspapers as well, explaining to everyone that it was a budgetary issue, which it was. I think I was able to ease the impact in terms of my relationships with local leaders. For the average Korean, however, it was seen as yet another sign of U.S. disregard for a staunch friend. Worse yet, the Chinese, Japanese and Russians all issued visas in Pusan, so the compare-and-contrast was unflattering. I can only imagine what Koreans thought when we closed completely.

I don't mean to belittle the budget issues involved. They went beyond the cost of stationing two or three officers. We shared a building USIS, an old Japanese bank building, built in the '20s. We knew major repairs were going to be required. While in Pusan, I was instructed to look around and see what other options there were. Finding a situation that would meet our security needs was the big problem. One local office building's management were interested, until they thought it through and realized it meant having riot police stationed around the building 24-7, standard practice at the embassy as well as consulate because of concerns about dissident or student-types rushing us. In the mid-eighties, the USIS in Seoul was captured and occupied as was the Pusan consulate. Space was going to be expensive for our Pusan operation.

Shortly after I got to Pusan, the DCM called from Seoul and told me to fire half of my staff because of the budget cuts. It was the worst job I ever had to do in the Foreign Service. Fortunately, I had one American position that was vacant, so I called back the vacancy notice. I got permission to keep one person on a personal service contract until we stopped processing visas. I did have to let one Foreign Service National (FSN) go. Deciding which one was tough because they were all good.



We continued U.S. citizen services such as passports, notariats and those sorts of things. I was determined to not let my representational and other duties be tied to the passport window, so we only opened the window for services half a day a week. That turned out too be fine. We could have done that a long time ago, and let the vice consul get out more to do political, commercial or representational work. I should also note that we would also go periodically to Taegu to do citizen services.

Expanding commercial work turned out to be a challenge. The fundamental issue was that Korea's large firms and many medium-sized as well had their headquarters in Seoul and so worked directly with FCS, the U.S. Foreign Commercial Service, if they needed assistance. FCS agreed with me that a full-time, trained FCS Korean staffer in Pusan could help U.S. exporters by developing local relationships with local medium-sized firms, but never got the funding. I didn't have the staff to really do the time-consuming work we needed.

The one thing I could do on the cheap was to set up an "American Business Center." The mayor came over to put up the sign on the consulate wall with me. FCS in Seoul sent me commercial almanacs of American firms and other promotional materials. We put some posters up in our waiting room. We did some training with one of my consular employees, so she could answer questions. Since it was our waiting room already for passports and other consular services it was all set up in terms of security for admitting people from the outside. It was a little hard to know what the pay off was. We did get some newspaper stories and had a steady stream of medium and small business people. It helped to show that amidst the trade friction, the U.S. government was working to promote U.S. exports.

I also spent a lot of time preparing for possible noncombatant evacuation operations (NEO) with my U.S. military colleagues. Up until the early 1990s when things got tense because of North Korea's nuclear program, the embassy and U.S. military command had not do much coordination on possible NEOs. The ex-pat community outside the embassy and military was also modest in size.

The military did have NEO briefings and periodic exercises for its dependents. I remember attending such a briefing when I was in Peace Corps. But the military was first of all very focused on their own personnel of which there were significant numbers. I don't know what the numbers were in 1969, but at that time my guess is military dependents may well have been the largest number of Americans and foreigners in country. By the '90s things had changed with a lot more American business people as well as English teachers working for various universities or private institutes; so it was a considerably larger number. There were also a large number of Japanese and others too.



With increased concern about heightened tensions with the North, our embassy and military began proactive cooperation. The surprise for my military colleagues was that I could not "order" ex-pat Americans to do anything from participating in exercises to evacuating if situation got bad. I could "advise" people through my warden's list, and did go out to some of the communities of U.S. business people working outside of Pusan and Taegu to discuss the process. This issue was a big deal for our little consulate and military bases in the consular district, because if anything happened to Kimpo airport in Seoul, evacuees would be put on trains south to Pusan. And, of course, our military in the south was going to have its hands full doing its primary mission, moving people and materiel into the Peninsula off ships in Pusan and getting them north.

A big challenge in preparing and exercising NEO plans was to keep a very low profile. The embassy didn't want the North or South Koreans to imagine we were preparing to evacuate American civilians and then attack the North. At the same time Washington wanted to keep maximum pressure on the North and "not take options off the table." In our district we didn't want to panic Americans either but did need to keep them informed. We also had to manage expectations among this group to our military wasn't going to have the resources to send helicopters out to pick up every American living in some small town.

My military colleagues from officers to enlisted were great. We spent a lot of time together developing plans from NEOs to base events.

Q: At this time and we've talked about this before, had anything thing gone ratcheting up North-South wise?

KLOTH: Again, because of the heightened tension over the North Korea nuclear program and the attempt to get the North Koreans into negotiations into an agreement, which did eventually come to fruition, tensions had gone higher. There was a great difference between the average Koreans view of the importance of the issue and the view of the American government. Koreans did not want to a war. Many of all political stripes worried that the United States would do something that would start a war. Underlying folk's attitudes was the long-standing frustration that a foreign government the U.S. would pursue a policy for its own reasons that put Korea at greater risk than Americans who lived out of North Korea's reach on the other side of the Pacific. And, of course, South Koreans felt they should be the prime negotiators with the North. Conservatives and liberals differed on what terms should be were united in the opinion that Americans didn't know how to deal with North Koreans. "You just don't understand those guys the way we do. Drive a rat into a corner, and it will bite you."



On the other hand, the same person who might be worried about an escalation to military action might later in a conversation insist that to negotiate with the North Koreans, you had to be tough or they would push you around. The common underlying theme was really the same, South Koreans should be dealing with the North, and the U.S. should let the ROK government run the show.

Q: Did you have a pretty good idea of industrial production and how the Koreans were doing?

KLOTH: Well, the Korean factories were booming. This was the early nineties, and they were much more diversified, churning out TVs and other electronic goodies, even airplane parts for Boeing. When I got there first in '69, they were "exporting" construction workers to places like Saudi Arabia. They were exporting cloth and some clothing. By '72, they were exporting a lot more clothing; by '75 even more clothing. By 1993, they were exporting automobiles and electronics from highly modern factories that had just been built.

From Pusan I would go out and visit plants such as the LG factory in Kumi near Taegu where the TVs were put together untouched by human hands because they had the latest equipment. I went over and saw the Pohang Steel Mill. I'd visited steel mills in Japan in the mid-'80s and even to my untrained eye this Pohang plant in '94 was certainly among the world's most modern. The people who were running it clearly knew their business well; it was impressive. Koreans' enthusiasm for education for the future was evident too. Pohang Steel built what its manager proudly called "Korea's MIT," Pohang Science and Technology University. That was an impressive place. They were working hard to get very sharp students there.

The Koreans were also developing an up-to-date defense industry as well. Changwon was one place they were doing it, and they were also building a plant out to the west of Changwon to assemble F-16 fighters. I visited Lockheed-Martin folks out there who I used to visit to see the plant and to check with them on U.S. citizen services issues. The first time I went out the floor was an empty. Before I left Korea, the first jets were rolled out. Making parts in Korea as well as doing the assembly was an important aspect of what was a carefully thought out program of industrial development.

Let me talk a bit more about U.S. outreach programs in the direct. After I left Pusan, the USIS posts in Pusan and Taegu were closed, although in the new Korea, now in the Internet age, the old USIS regional posts focus on a library and English programs was anachronistic. Koreans could see the NY Times on line; access to uncensored news was not the issue it had been under the dictators. Koreans could afford to and did hire native speaker English teachers in large numbers.

Q: How did you feel about that system?



KLOTH: Well, I always thought having USIA distinct from State Department was artificial. The distinction between consulate and USIA was something that was lost on most Koreans; certainly the Koreans saw the USIA as the U.S. government. USIA had some very good officers. I felt sorry, thinking back to my time in the embassy's political section, that we didn't have cables reporting from our USIA posts. Their people learned a lot; they were out and about and talking to a lot of people, and often had a very good sense of what was on people's mind, but it didn't get in the cable stream in the way it should have.

I think my final point is that we need to label our posts outside capitals as consulates or better yet consul generals. A major point is to show the local folks we think highly of them. In Pusan and Fukuoka the other foreign representatives were consuls general; the American was a "consul," although we were the ally and major trading partner. If an important part of the role of our regional post is to emphasize the importance that we attach to our relationship with a country, we don't serve ourselves well by having representatives of lesser title than those of other governments. I think all these "virtual" or "American-presence" labels are dreadful if we use them in cities where there are diplomats from elsewhere with consular titles.

Q: Was there much of an American alumnae association? Koreans who have gone and we are now entering an era where Koreans are going to the United States studying and all and then coming back weren't they?

KLOTH: Right. In the '80s, we began to see a U-turn up to the '60s and '70s. I don't know the numbers but...

Q: It just wasn't a factor.

KLOTH: Out of every ten that would go, I suppose perhaps seven or eight would stay; by the '80s that was turning around because of the opportunities in Korea. I think by now it's even more so, although we clearly continued to have significant Korean migration to the U.S. There has certainly been a leap in Korean sightseers. I remember talking to a cab driver in Pusan who had been to Europe a couple of times with some of his friends on tours. He hoped he could send his kids maybe to summer school abroad to learn a language. He hoped to get to the U.S. too, but said matter of factly, "I'm a cab driver, you know how hard it is to get a U.S. visa. I can go to Europe a lot easier."

Q: Were you picking up, was this a different world, a different outlook in Seoul or not?



KLOTH: Yes and no. The national TV was clearly the major source of news and programs, so I think in that sense no. But in Korea, as in Japan with Tokyo, Seoul is the center of the universe; it is the center of government, business, education and society. As in Japan, I would go to a lot of receptions with business people and government people in Pusan. It often seemed that a third of the crowd had just got back from Seoul, and a third were going tomorrow. They had to spend a lot of time there to work the bureaucracy, either their company's bureaucracy or the government bureaucracy.

Q: Well, they had a pretty good train going up there didn't they?

KLOTH: They called it the Saemaul high-speed train. It took four to four and a half hours, and it was very comfortable.

Q: How about fleet visits?

KLOTH: Well, because of the North Korea and the tension with North Korea, I had three carrier visits by two carriers, the Kitty Hawk and the Constellation, over only a three or four month period. In terms of the consulate's representational work and showing Koreans we valued them as allies, it was great to have a two-star admiral host a reception for local government, military and business people. I was actively involved. We had an army base in Pusan and a small U.S. Navy base in Chinhae and a great USO, and they took care of logistics that a consulate would help with in an area without such bases. Local officials and police as well as ordinary citizens were great. Everyone wanted to make sure the visits went well, and they did.

Q: How important were the business leaders of the shipyards and steel works and all that?

KLOTH: Well, again their line of sight was back to Seoul because that's where the company headquarters are. The steel mill, shipyards, and auto plants were some distance from Pusan. The Pohang and Hyundai managers were clearly powerful and important people in their area, but they weren't necessarily local. In Pusan, in addition to the people who worked for the out-of-town major companies, there were also businessmen who had significant local businesses, some of them small or medium sized manufacturers, who were influential local leaders. These people were, as in an American city, important people with roots in the community.

Q: On universities, one, were there universities there and what happened in the springtime? Did they come out and demonstrate?



KLOTH: When I was there, demonstrations were not significant at the universities. We would, however, in the fall and spring have a few demonstrations, including near the consulate. We had a few riot police around the consulate 24-7, but when a "demo" was expected, even if it involved just a few people, the riot police would come out in force. They were well informed about what was going on.

Q: Were these demonstrations against the United States and for what?

KLOTH: The protests were about U.S. policies - U.S. role in the division of Korea, U.S. troops in Korea, the Hialeah U.S. Army Base being in the middle of Pusan or some issue of the moment. There were some dissident groups who wanted the consulate to move because it was a symbol of the U.S.-Korean unfair "relationship". Moving Camp Hialeah and associated facilities in Pusan was not just a dissident issue. They sat on prime real estate in that port city surrounded by mountains. Quite naturally moving the base was very much on the minds of the business community as well. From their point of view we're underutilizing potential commercial and residential real estate.

The U.S. military officers I worked with were very sharp and understood very well. The official position was that if the Korean government would build an alternate facility suitable to the mission we'd move. Most of even the dissidents, I discussed this with, believed we meant what we said. The problem for even a business leader in a place like Pusan is that decisions on Korea's budget would be made in Seoul and moving bases around the capital would be higher priority. Kim Young Sam came in as President. He was from the area, so Pusan people hoped he might do something, but nothing happened.

We had one big shipping incident when I was in Pusan that made American President Line (APL) very appreciative of our having a consulate there. An APL ship was hit entering the harbor in the fog by a Korean ship departing, nearly sinking the President Monroe. The captain told me that he was ready to abandon ship, "You know, I have so few crew on this big container ship that I can't respond to emergencies the way we could when we had smaller ships and larger crews. I came close to abandoning ship."

Fortunately, the captain was able to get it into the harbor and get it alongside a pier. The next excitement started when workers were cutting jammed containers loose to unload them. The contents of one caught fire and set others alight.

I got a call at 7:30 on a sunny May Saturday morning from the Office of the Under Secretary for Economic Affairs who had just been called by the president of APL, asking for help from our military in Korea. I went down to my Navy colleague's house and knocked on her door. As luck would have it, there were two Navy ships with special fire-fighting capabilities in port, an oiler and a guided missile cruiser. Both ships' crews had special fire-fighting training and equipment.



Like characters in a movie, we picked up the Navy officers, packed into my car and raced off to the commercial pier. The Navy crews arrived quickly and, working with the Korean firemen, quelled the fires.

My head FSN, a very sharp guy, was already at the APL office and worked with the local APL people and harbor officials. It was quite an experience.

Q: Was your wife able to find a job in Pusan?

KLOTH: No, she didn't, but she continued to teach up at a university in Seoul and commuted back and forth on the Saemaul train. Jobs for spouses was a real issue if they didn't want to be English teachers. We were lucky.

Q: Where did you go next?

KLOTH: I left Pusan in 1995, and came back to work in the old Political-Military bureau, which was smaller than it is now but had wider compass; this was before the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency merged moved into the Department. I joined the office that did missile, chemical and biological weapons nonproliferation as head of the chemical and biological weapons issues section.

Q: You did that from '95 to '97. What was sort of the chemical situation in '95-'96?

KLOTH: Well, most of our work was with allies and international groups of states trying to limit the ability of governments or terrorists to acquire chemical and biological weapons. Stopping acquisition of weapons has challenges but the really tough issue was to identify and prevent transfer of equipment a country could use to make chemical or biological weapons. My section chaired an intergovernmental group that reviewed applications for export of equipment, which might be used for that purpose. This is tough because much of this same equipment can be used for perfectly legitimate purposes. It requires review by people who know what the issues are. The challenge is to do it in a manner that provides a good solid review but that also is expeditious manner so that legitimate sales are not held up. We also worked with other countries to identify proliferation-related exports from their firms as well. Here a big issue is being able to provide persuasive evidence without undermining sensitive intelligence collection. Another office in PM reviewed items clearly identified as U.S. defense exports.

Q: Again, sticking to your perspective where were the trouble spots?



KLOTH: This work was classified, so I'd prefer to highlight a couple of process issues that perhaps give a taste of the work an office in State does.

We spent a lot of time working with other agencies, including the intelligence community, on Congressional reports required by legislation. The frustration was they we had requirements in different legislation for reports that were redundant, a waste of time. We were editors because the information and arguments came from the intelligence community, we were proactive editors. We had to be sure conclusions were solid.

The problem seemed to be that there was no central clearing house on the Hill. Congress would throw reporting requirements into one piece of legislation for one purpose, and then add a similar but slightly different requirement into another at a later time. Undoubtedly, the drafters were trying to address issues of significance to the Congress, but the impression at our end was that no one was checking for redundancy or thinking about the cost to the taxpayer of churning out multiple different reports on the same topic. Nonproliferation wasn't the only area this was an issue.

When I left in 1997 and later when I was in the Economic Bureau, there was talk in the legislative office of undertaking a Department wide effort to create a master list of all these reports, identifying redundancies and asking Congress to establish a cost-effective reporting schedule. But in the end, as I recall, the decision was that it was going to be too onerous to go off and do that because of the various legislative as well as committee prerogatives that were involved. But that was one area of some frustration that we had in terms of staff time being taken up with tasks of limited utility.

Perhaps the most exciting biggest job was right at the end of my time in PM, and involved obtaining the advice and consent of the Senate for the Chemical Weapons Treaty, negotiated by the first Bush administration but not been sent up to the Hill before Bush lost the '92 election. Ratification wasn't a top Clinton administration priority until '97, when enough other nations had ratified the treaty and it was about to come into force without the U.S., depriving our government of a seat at the table when others set up the new treaty organization. Suddenly ratification became a top Administration priority. The NSC took the lead with Senator Helms, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee and treaty opponent, to get the treaty through committee and to the Senate floor, where there were enough votes to pass it. The Chairman, however, extracted three major concessions. USIS and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, which he saw as an anachronism in the post-Soviet world, were to become part of State. USAID's head would report to the Secretary. State, our office in particular, also had to scramble to get out some last minute notifications to other states that the Senator required.

Q: On PM, had that office become staffed pretty heavily with civil servants?



KLOTH: PM had, I don't know what the numbers were, but certainly PM had a good hefty chunk of civil servants because you needed people who had the historical memory, as well as the technical understanding of, for example, the Chemical Weapons Treaty.

Q: And you needed people who had really in-depth knowledge of the weapons and as you say the bureaucracy and the negotiations.

KLOTH: Right, FSOs provide a broader perspective on how issues fit into overall policy in a country or a region or globally.

Q: In '97 you are off to...?

KLOTH: To Tokyo. I took a job as deputy in the environment, science and technology (EST) section from 1997-2000. I like to say it was going from bad science to good science, meaning from the use of science to create very nasty weapons to the use of science to advance the human condition in happier ways. I was also coordinator for the U.S.-Japan Common Agenda, an effort to increase and highlight for our two publics cooperation on a wide variety of issues from development to the environment to international crime. We had six officers and a very good Office Management Specialist; a minister counselor was the head of section. We also had what we called the "science cluster," which included a National Science Foundation office, an Department of Energy officer and the USAID representative. USAID was in our cluster is because our section and I, in particular, was the coordinator in the embassy for the U.S.-Japan Common Agenda. When an unexpected year long gap in the USAID position, I filled in. The EST section also had three top-notch FSNs. NSF and USAID also had excellent Japanese staff in addition to the American officers.

The Common Agenda started in 1993 was an initiative by the Japanese, and the thought was that there are three pillars to the relationship: security, trade and cooperation on many global issues. Security and trade issues usually got the headlines, meaning negative headlines, so the Japanese government wanted to highlight positive cooperation through the "Common Agenda" name plate. They also wanted to see both governments get more bang for the buck or yen through increased coordination. We agreed.

Q: This is what the press is all about.



KLOTH: Right and, in particular, the Common Agenda covered a wide range of important but little appreciated areas from cooperation on development to scientific and technological research and the Kyoto process. You remember the Kyoto Conference on Climate Change was in the late fall of '97.

Q: So that was your kind of arrival?

KLOTH: I arrived in August, so we were in the final run up to the Kyoto Conference.

Q: Why don't we talk about the Kyoto Conference? What was that all about?

KLOTH: I arrived in August of 1997, and we were in the final run up to the Kyoto Conference on climate change. We had a very sharp officer who had been there a year already working on Kyoto and knew it very, very well.

Q: Who was that?

KLOTH: A guy by the name of Allen Yu. Unfortunately, Allen had to take emergency leave, I took over for the last major pre-Kyoto Conference meeting. Undersecretary Wirth, former Senator Tim Wirth, led a U.S. delegation out. There was a lot of contention between us and the Europeans as to the level at which the goals, the targets, should be set. Another huge issue was that the Chinese, Indians, Brazilians, and others in the developing world didn't want to have targets levied on them at all, lest such obligations slow their development. Of course, the underdeveloped countries argued that the greenhouse gas problem was literally manufactured in the developed world and that, as developing countries they couldn't afford all the expensive technology to, for instance, clean up emissions from coal plants. Indeed they needed to get as many coal fired plants up and running to provide the electricity they needed for development at the lowest possible immediate cost.

Between the United States and the Europeans, there was disagreement about the levels of emissions targets that should be accepted by the developed countries. It was my first experience at a UN conference. The U.S. delegation was in constant communication before they came out with both American businesses and American environmental NGOs; listening to both sides very carefully and trying to craft a position that would enable us to cut down our emissions without adversely affecting our economy.



In Europe the political mix meant their governments seemed more concerned with cutting emissions. As I looked at this getting ready for the preparatory meeting and the Kyoto Conference, in both the press and the reporting from our posts in Europe, we didn't seem to hear much from the European business side or the economists who were concerned about the impact on business. It was also my first experience seeing the dance between representatives of both individual European states and the EU. There were times, I think, when the American delegation and other national delegations found this a little frustrating because both the EU and individual states wanted to talk and courted. Fortunately, Allen was back for Kyoto, where we certainly needed his expertise. The huge U.S. delegation included executive branch officials from many agencies as well as members of Congress. Representatives from U.S. business and environmental NGOs attend too. The Vice President zoomed in for the finale. Kyoto was an enormous undertaking logistically for an embassy. We mobilized administrative, political and economic section officers, and even our defense attaché<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> mobilized before we were done.

My boss and I did a tag team, because the conference was, as I recall, 7-9 days. My boss went down at the beginning and the end, and I was there in the middle to give whatever additional help was needed. When I first arrived on maybe the third or fourth day, all the delegations were very, very busy, but were in pretty good humor. By the end, however, people were tired; jet lag hit like a club - they had flown in from all over the world. Most importantly, the issues were narrowing down along predictable lines, and it was not clear how a compromise was going to be reached. The tension level among the Japanese delegation, who as hosts wanted a success most of all, had gone well above the roof. This was a tremendous big deal for them, and the idea that the conference could somehow end without a Kyoto agreement was for them taken very personally.

Q: Well, you know as this thing reached its end, how did you personally and your colleagues and also to the American delegation view this thing? The Kyoto thing is still, well, it hasn't been ratified, meaning that it still is a bone of contention, but how did you view it as it was coming to an agreement?

KLOTH: Everyone on the U.S. delegation was working hard, but many were frustrated because of an underlying sense that no matter what agreement came out, it was not going to be ratified on the Hill. The U.S. would sign on but would not get the legislative support that it needed. As we went running up to it, Under Secretary Wirth, who had come to the preparatory meeting in Tokyo resigned as the Under Secretary for Global Affairs, and took a job with Ted Turner's new UN organization. While U/S Wirth insisted he was driven by the opportunity, many and certainly many Japanese officials felt it was an ominous omen for the Kyoto process. The Japanese first question to us was: does this mean he thinks this agreement is not going to happen, that this conference will be unsuccessful, and he doesn't want to be associated with it?



Q: It strikes me that this wasn't very gracious on the part of Wirth.

KLOTH: From where I sat in Tokyo and then Kyoto, the timing wasn't helpful. But, as you well know, we diplomats spend a lot of time holding other people's hands.

The U.S. delegation, including the senators and representatives who came out, worked hard. The acting under secretary, who was the assistant secretary, not only had to work with the foreign delegations, but met every day with the environmental groups and the U.S. business groups, separately, of course. She would brief them on what was happening and then take their comments and suggestions. Often what one liked, the other hated, although not always. The new world of multi-constituent diplomacy is a challenge.

Q: Did you find an awful lot of you might call "ideology" or very firm ideas on this? I mean the business delegation said, "What are you trying to do ruin us?" The scientific people were saying, "You are going to ruin the world if you don't do something."

KLOTH: I think the question for the business people was what are the costs involved and what's the impact those costs are going to have on American businesses competitiveness, particularly vis a vis firms in countries such as China or India that do not take on environmental obligations. The representatives from NGOs were vociferous in demands for tough targets.

Let me add to that we also had on the U.S. delegation a delegate from the Pentagon, I believe a Navy officer. Our armed forces operate globally ships, airplanes and other vehicles. The services were very concerned about the impact of an agreement on their operations and costs. I would not say they were negative. They understood the need for a green environment, after all the sailors and the airmen are in the air and on the seas. The issue was costs and a key part of that was whether there would be a global standard or individual national standards; the latter could be a nightmare for our military operations.

Q: How about the Japanese? I mean the Japanese are a big business power obviously.

KLOTH: The Japanese government had clearly committed itself to an agreement. Japanese had, after a number of awful incidents, cleaned up a lot of their own industry. There was concern among Japanese business about the potential cost and the impact on competitiveness. Japanese are very sensitive about how the world sees them. Japan was hosting the conference, so most Japanese wanted success. Nevertheless, Japanese business was calculating the costs for different options carefully.

Q: Mercury.



KLOTH: Mercury pollution too, that was one of the big ones.

Q: Or that horrible situation in some village.

KLOTH: Minamata? I went to a U.S.-Japan-China-Korea waste disposal conference there hosted by the University of Montana's Mansfield Center. Minamata is an out of the way place. It had a museum with the history of the problem with mercury poisoning. I saw horrific photos of what had happened to those poor people. So the Japanese were very conscious those problems. I think by the fall of '97, many Japanese businessmen were as concerned as the broader public that this Kyoto process be successful. I suppose that, given the politics in Japan as host, opponents of an agreement were not likely to be as publicly vocal as say some of the American business people.

Q: Also, were the Japanese looking towards the new world as regards anti-pollution manufacturing devices and things of this nature?

KLOTH: Japanese industry is very sharp at seeing which way the wind is blowing and sailing with it, not against it. Think back to the first oil shock in '73. I was out in Seattle, a graduate student. One joke that went around was that when Congress proposed gas mileage consumption limits, U.S. auto maker hired lobbyists. The Japanese hired engineers. I'm not sure that's really changed three decades later.

To finish off Kyoto, the Conference was at deadlock when it was time for me to get on the bullet train back to Tokyo. My boss and I sat down in the coffee shop at the Kyoto railroad station. I briefed him on what was going on. Vice President Gore then made a dramatic arrival and broke the deadlock, putting forward U.S. agreement on a standard, so consensus was reached except, although China and the developing countries remained outside. Congress never ratified.

The discouraging part after such high theater were the reports afterwards that the Administration knew Congress wouldn't support what was put on the table and, therefore, was not going to push it forward on the Hill. While the Japanese were delighted the Vice President had made "their" Kyoto conference a success, for the next two and a half years, we were frequently asked by Japanese in and out of government, why the U.S. hadn't ratified yet.

Q: Did you explain this to the Japanese, your counterpart?



KLOTH: The Japanese watch U.S. politics a lot more closely than we watch Japanese politics. Japanese officials understood, although they were very frustrated.

Q: Well then, after the Kyoto Conference what were you up to?

KLOTH: Okay, well then my focus was on the Common Agenda, as embassy coordinator, and on oceans-related science issues. We would have Common Agenda meetings once a year at the Under Secretary level home and away. We had them twice in Tokyo and once in Washington when I was there.

At high level meetings, the top officials always want new initiatives every year, but there is not necessarily money for new initiatives. Worse yet for us State Department worker bees, State had no money of its own for projects. Other agencies funded. USAID was perhaps the biggest gorilla in the room on the work with our Japanese counterparts. Nevertheless, AID didn't have new funds for new projects every year, so there was always a scramble before the meetings to come up with "significant new initiatives" that could be taken that wouldn't involve new monies. Of course, our Japanese foreign ministry colleagues did not have new monies every year either, so we were partners in pain. Working with Japanese and American NGOs on projects that were funded was fun, however.

Another factor was that Japanese assistance budgets were coming under increasing pressure from the Diet. The Japanese economy was doing poorly. Diet members were asking why taxpayers' money should be spent on foreigners, not their constituents.

Q: Did you find just in all this type of thing you've got a bunch of people particularly at the top trying to do things when a lot of things that they were doing really required at a certain point you saying, okay we've done that, now let the people who actually manage it do it, and it is going to take a couple years and let's keep our hands off?

KLOTH: The issue was not that the top wanted to monkey with on-going projects, but that they wanted new initiatives and didn't have the money to pay for new stuff.

Q: What did you do on the oceans side.



KLOTH: I worked closely with some great people at the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA) in my role as oceans attaché½. This slot was for many years a separate position in the economic section, filled by a non-State expert from the Fisheries service. The oceans attaché½ was very important to the U.S. and the Japanese when the United States let foreign fleets come in to the American Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) to catch a set quota of fish. The attaché½ was the go-between between Washington and the Japanese government on fisheries and, in particular, quota issues. He was also the go-between on highly contentious whaling issues. By the mid-'90s, foreign vessels could not fish our waters, and maritime environmental issues were at the top of the pile, so the position was moved to the EST section and environment and scientific issues were an important part of my portfolio.

NOAA in the late '90s had a project called the Argos Project which put floats out all over the world's oceans to collect data. While 70 percent of the world's surface is covered by water, we know very little about it in terms of the science of it. This also relates to not only to climate change but daily weather, storm predictions, health of the oceans, fisheries, there is a wide range. Fisheries issues were still in my portfolio. They were chiefly focused on the challenge of trying to protect the resource with large. We did have some fisheries protection treaty negotiations that I was involved in.

The whale issue was highly contentious. It's a terrific example of a diplomat's worst nightmare. The diplomat's job is to make deals. I'm being a little facetious here. How do you make a deal when one side sees whales as, if not your brothers and sisters, then your cousins, while the others - the Japanese, Norwegians and Icelanders - sees whales as cows and pigs, a food source. Of course, you don't want to kill them all, because then there won't be any left to eat tomorrow. You can agree to manage them wisely, but eating them is no worse than eating a cow or a pig. If whales are your cousins, just eating a few is unacceptable. Where's the space everyone to give a little and get a little?

Q: How important were whales in say the Japanese diet?

KLOTH: By the late '90s, whale meat was a pricey delicacy. The Japanese only did some "scientific" hunting, so supply was limited.

Q: Well, it is just like back in the turn of the last century, chicken was the main meal on Sunday, a book even called Chicken Every Sunday. Chicken was a pretty fancy item; we didn't have the great chicken farms.



KLOTH: Right, right. After World War II the American occupation government had encouraged the Japanese to whale to supply protein to the diet. But by the late '70s, early and late '80s, the whaling moratorium became for many in Japan a symbol of cultural imperialism on the part of Americans. Americans are chomp away on their burgers and their fried chicken, and badmouth Japanese for wanting to eat whale.

We also had a NASA representative in our office. Every time NASA does a space launch with foreign crew members, the crew visits the foreign country afterwards, so we had two visits to Japan. The second one was the one in which John Glenn also flew and the Japanese crewmember was a woman, so that got a lot of attention in Tokyo. Everyone in the section usually worked in some way on the visits which were fun and highlighted U.S.-Japan cooperation.

The NASA representative was a full member of our section. He was a GS-13, I think. NASA management was sharp. Some agencies think having stand-alone offices staffed by their own mid-level or even senior people increases their local clout, perhaps at the specialized ministry but not across the Japanese government. NASA released that our arrangement gave them a solid expert on the ground, plus the services and clout of the EST minister-counselor, a high ranking diplomat, which impressed our Japanese counterparts in the scientific as well as other ministries. Because inter-ministerial communication is often difficult in Japan, the title "career diplomat" can enable you to move horizontally in ways not so simple for what the Japanese bureaucracy see as "detailees" from U.S. functional agencies. The diplomat needs, however, to demonstrate that he or she has the support of the U.S. agency to be effective.

Q: Yeah, this is something we often forget about. We think in terms of our own bureaucracy and not...

KLOTH: Not how it looks to the host country officials. Further, the NASA representative working on our section's issues, like high-level visits, gave him experience outside his usual box and a useful perspective on how, say, NASA's work supports and is supported by broader U.S. interests in Japan.

Q: Well, looking at the time you were, there how would you describe the flow of scientific knowledge between the United States and Japan? Was anybody ahead or behind? How was it working?



KLOTH: First of all, the amount of contact that goes on is far beyond what I had imagined. When our minister counselor and I visited Tsukuba, Japan's science city, and its nuclear research facility, we were startled to be shown around by two American professors from Princeton and Cornell who come over every year with their students to use the facility, one of only a few available in the world. The global demand exceeds the supply, and they were happy to get time on the Japanese machines. So there's a lot that goes on. We don't hear about it in the embassy because they don't have problems.

Language is a big barrier in terms of foreigners having access to Japanese research data. The Japanese are also very concerned about this being a barrier to their access to foreign research. The science faculties want to make sure that their students can read, write and speak English, so that they can participate actively in the global scientific community. So, for example, at Tokyo University, which is Japan's primo university, the MA students present their MA thesis in English.

While, as I noted, some Americans went to Japan to do research, I'm sure many more Japanese came and come to work in our facilities. They come over; they do research in U.S. facilities and certainly make contributions. While there was Japanese government money for research, Japanese scientists complained of bureaucratic entanglements. They still looked to the United States as the most hospitable place for researchers.

For example, Japanese scientists told me that the Japanese government would identify an outstanding scientist or what was felt to be the cutting edge technology or cutting edge research topics, and provide government funds to set up a research institute, often getting very good results from it. But, let's say five years down the road, that would no longer be the cutting edge and the reward, the cost benefit analysis, would've shifted to another area. But the bureaucratic and political system militated against open competition for grants, so that individual or institute would continue to get funding regardless, and at the expense of innovative research by lesser-knowns. Our National Science Foundation folks argued that the U.S. system was much more nimble.

Before we leave Japan, let me make another point about the Common Agenda. One of the frustrating things with the Common Agenda and one of its goals was to highlight all the good things, good cooperation going on in other areas other than defense and trade. Overall our security alliance had kept the peace in Northeast Asia since 1953. Americans and Japanese were benefiting mightily from trade. Nevertheless, issues such as base locations or incidents of crime by U.S. military members or trade disputes grabbed headlines. It was very difficult to do highlight cooperation because it wasn't bad news.



I and my Japanese Foreign Ministry colleagues thought a lot about the problem. We could usually get a small paragraph in the press when the meetings took place but it was hard to imagine many people even noticed. In the final meeting of my tour in 2000, we had a breakthrough and got front page coverage in the Tokyo papers of the NOAA Argos oceanographic research float project which Japan joined. The breakthrough came when the powerful Ministry of Transportation (MOT) heard about the project and invited me to come over and brief them. They became very enthusiastic, because Japan is, after all, an island nation dependent on maritime transport. MOT wanted in. There was some hesitancy on the NOAA and Japanese scientists' side, because the transportation ministry is clearly not a science research organization. There was concern that the scientific research part might get deflected or diminished.

Because I understood NOAA's interests and was in Tokyo and could meet with the Japanese S&T Agency as well as the MOT officials, I was able to get everyone to focus on the advantages to all of working together. A key point was that MOT had a great deal of clout in the Japanese government's budget process. Well, NOAA brought out a model of the float to the 2000 Common Agenda meeting. MOT held a press conference highlighting the project with the float there as a visual aid. Their press corps was very much plugged in to not only the editorial boards of their papers but also the Diet, so we had a front-page newspaper story with an artist's rendition of the float, fully deployed! It was a very good feeling and also very frustrating. When things go well, few much care.

Q: Ted, you left in 2000, whither?

KLOTH: I came back to work as deputy director in the Economic Policy shop in the East Asia Pacific Bureau. EAP/EP's main job was working on APEC, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation economic organization with members from both sides of the Pacific from Russia, China, through Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand, around up along the Pacific coast of Latin America to include the U.S. and Canada. It was founded in 1989. They meet every year at the presidential level, preceded by ministerial and a stream of senior official-level sessions. The range of issues covered is very broad, so the office is very busy. I believe there are now 21 countries and on the web today it said something like 40 percent of world trade.

When I was there, we were focused on the leaders' meeting in Vietnam. Each year the host country is different, moving around the rim of the Pacific. The leaders' meeting is the capstone, the heads of economies meeting, and we use that term because Taiwan is also a member, and it's our policy that there is only one China. Taiwan is, however, an economic player that shouldn't be ignored.



It was exciting because Vietnam was going to host for the first time, and this was going to be a major coming-out party for Vietnam in terms of becoming part of the global economic system. Vietnam saw that very much as key to the future of its economic development and for the relationship between the United States and Vietnam, because the President would go. So this was loaded with significance for our two countries.

APEC was very plugged in to the world of Internet technology. Emails flew between people working on various projects or areas in all the APEC countries. A footnote here about the struggle to get State to keep up with technology. In 2000, the State system didn't allow officers to go from their desktop computers to the Internet. In EP we had a couple of Internet-linked computers in our lobby area. All day we hopped from our office chairs to the Internet computer when someone else wasn't using them. If you'd put a TV camera in the ceiling, it would have looked like the Keystone cops. Secretary Powell did a great thing when he got Internet on every desk.

For the United States, an important goal was to get HIV aids on the APEC table and a commitment from the APEC economies to work together to stop the spread of AIDs and to deal with the problems of people already infected. The initial reaction from many of the economic officials involved in other countries was that AIDs was a health ministers' problem, not an economic problem. One of the best things I ever wrote in the Foreign Service was a one line addition to remarks for our senior official to deliver at a preparatory meeting to build the agenda for the presidential level meetings. We needed to get these bright guys focused on what it meant for them. We needed to speak their language. I came up with a simple thought: Imagine the impact on your economy now and over the next decades, if you have HIV infection rates of 20-40 percent of the workforce. I have to admit that bright idea was one that caught my attention in a moving statement by an African delegate to a Tokyo AIDs conference I attended while an EST officer.

Q: I was going to say you had the example of African countries which were being devastated and I suppose still are. Of course, tourism for the Asian countries was huge.

KLOTH: Tourism is a huge one. We also pointed out that HIV/AIDs potentially hits everyone in your labor force from managers to factory workers from truck drivers to teachers. So what's the economic impact going to be? Our senior official told us that after he said the first sentence, he had the room's attention. So that was very satisfying.

Q: Were you faced with the problem, how would you say not just the Asian but we are talking about the whole Pacific Rim. But in Africa you had cases of countries going into denial.



KLOTH: Exactly, and that was a big issue in Asia because countries were saying that it's not going to happen here. There is a whole stream obviously of social issues and cultural issues and religious issues that this touches on for a politician in these countries, as well as for the general populace, in terms of denial of everything from the size of the sex industry to the lack of sex education or the extent of a gay community. Of course, this disease is not confined to that community but in some areas the notion was: admit HIV was a problem, admit some of your citizens are gay, and that is anathema.

We had the evidence of the links between economic activity and the spread of HIV aids in the region in countries like China, where you could see it going along the truck routes. Again, these are complex problems, even gathering the statistics to understand the problems' dynamics is difficult, in countries where the health systems are very underdeveloped. Our focus was to increase cooperation from exchange of information on infection rates to ideas on best practices for preventing infection.

Q: I was thinking, when you talk about the Pacific there is a tendency for obvious reasons to focus on the Asian side. But you've got Mexico, Chile and other countries on the east side of the Pacific. Were they comfortable playing with their Asian partners?

KLOTH: Well, they'd certainly seen within APEC this big opportunity to interact and network at various levels with countries that had already demonstrated they knew how to develop. You mentioned Mexico, of course, at that time and since I guess the '90s and certainly pushed on by the opportunities created by the U.S.-Mexico FTA...

Q: Free Trade Agreement.

KLOTH: Japanese companies, Koreans, other Asian but particularly Japanese set up plants in Mexico. They clearly had economic interaction going on already, and they wanted to multiply the benefits by being in APEC.

Thinking about U.S. economic foreign policy, APEC added to our multi-dimensional approach. We have three levels. We have bilateral relations; one could think of something like Mexico and the Free Trade agreement as one of the cornerstones of those efforts, but often it's bilateral negotiations to reduce individual barriers. Then we have a regional approach working through organizations like APEC. Then we have the global level, which is the World Trade Organization, the WTO. The goal is to open markets for U.S. goods and services, and we've been pursuing this agenda at various levels for decades. If some things are difficult to move forward on a bilateral level, you may try at a regional level, forcing folks who refuse to move forward to compete with other countries in their region willing to do so. It also gives officials political cover and builds broader support for change. But clearly it's labor-intensive work at high levels.



Q: Did you find that you or any of your colleagues or were there any groups that were saying, 'Hey, wait a minute we are giving away the store on all these free'...opening up things because all these other countries aren't going to play the same game or it's really hurting us, the unions, the manufacturing side, one is saying what the hell are we producing outside of service.

KLOTH: As, you know, it was my experience in Korea and Japan that many U.S. companies want to expand their sales to new markets. The companies in the United States and the workers that feel pressured by the foreign imports coming want us to have a protectionist position and either they are under pressure or are afraid they will come under pressure. So you've certainly touched on the political issue in the United States as well as the economic issue. We mustn't forget that the global and domestic economic system is continually changing whether we like it or not. I grew up in New England. Look at the history of that region. The changes have been tremendous over the past two hundred years. Every administration I served under, Republican or Democratic, was determined to keep our markets open and to open foreign markets.

That said, I think over the past three decades we saw an increased concern in both parties about how to deal with the human consequences. A fifty year old auto worker laid off in Detroit is not going to retrain as a computer engineer or even easily move to Kentucky when a foreign automaker opens a plant there.

Q: Well, did you find was there a different style or approach say on the Chinese part or not?

KLOTH: In China, and many other countries with a more aggressive government role in economic planning, the government's legitimacy is often very much rooted in achieving a publicly announced rate of economic growth. China has been astute in letting foreign, including U.S. firms in, on China's terms. With such a large potential market and low labor costs and a literate and ambitious work force, such firms would naturally want to build factories in China, transferring technological and management skills. China's goal is to see Chinese companies become international players. Who should worry us more 21st century Chinese software engineers or 20th century Chinese Red Guards?

Labor rights were an APEC issue, but the kinds of things that American delegations would say and concerns raised would be raised with not just China but with other member countries where workers were unable to organize freely. Countries such as Mexico wanted to add free flow of blue-collar labor to the discussion of the free flow of capital, goods, services and companies across borders. We were uninterested.



APEC's big-picture idea was to pick out the issues that could be moved forward as a whole and get consensus to do so. With so many different levels of economic development as well as often complicated bilateral relationships, it's not surprising that getting something done took so much effort, but amazing that anything got done at all.

I would also like to comment too on another aspect that made working in EP "different." The EP office was staffed by an interesting collage of Foreign and Civil Service State employees, Presidential Management Fellows, and people on loan from other agencies. The mid-1990s hiring freeze at State had left gaps that the office director had to scramble to find bodies to fill. It was fun to work with such a crazy quilt group.

Another peculiarity of that office was that when these higher level meetings took place, the office virtually emptied out because we needed to provide staff at the overseas locations. Our embassies could not handle the substantive side with so many special topics and take care of the heavy logistical requirements too. Often I and the Office Management Specialists (OMS) were the only ones left in the office. I wound up acting office director, Senior Official (DAS-level) and action officer on all our portfolios.

Q: Ted, then in 2001 where did you go?

KLOTH: In 2001, I moved to the Bureau for Economic and Business Affairs (EB) and its Office of Economic Policy and Public Diplomacy. This office had two sides. I was the deputy on the policy side, and we had a deputy for public diplomacy. This was the result of the merging of USIA, U.S. Information Agency, into the State Department in the 1990s. Nominally, our office director reported to the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, whose portfolio was trade. But, in fact, we wound up the assistant secretary's personal staff, in part because our job was to look out over all the economic issues EB handled and give him a heads up on issues or ideas were coming down the road or that people were not paying sufficient attention to because they were struggling to keep their noses above water with day-to-day demands.



We also did a lot of practical things. We were the Department's coordinator for the G-8 meetings, which were in many ways like the APEC meetings, with frequent high-level meetings culminating in a Presidential summit. It was tremendously labor intensive. We also coordinated the BPP, the Bureau Performance Plan, for the assistant secretary. This effort was a labor-intensive effort too, because while EB didn't have any embassies, we covered global economic issues. Frankly, too, while the assistant secretary took it very seriously - he had to defend it in a meeting with the Deputy Secretary no one else was as focused. We were unlikely to get any new positions, even if the BPP showed we were understaffed, as we were in some offices. State people outside of administration or consular affairs never, in my experience, see much utility in planning. We don't usually have any money for programs, and political or economic situations or negotiations change in ways that make year or even six-month plans of any detail seem superfluous.

Q: Did you sense a feeling of when the Republican administration came in hostility to that, which had gone before or not or in any particular area?

KLOTH: Certainly, the new Bush Administration wanted to show it was a "big improvement" over the policies of the Clinton Administration, just as the Clinton folks wanted to "set the country back on the right track" after Bush I. I was in the East Asia Pacific bureau at the transition. Jim Kelly who came in as the new Assistant Secretary for East Asia Pacific, knew the Department well. He had been a Naval officer and worked in the National Security Council, so he had an appreciation for the State Department and the people in it. Colin Powell's arrival as secretary was tremendously positive because he reached out and showed he cared about people as well as policy. Certainly we were on our toes because of the concerns of the Republicans about the fiscal as well as policy sides of the Department's operations.

I'd certainly say that Deputy Secretary Armitage too had everybody on their toes partly because of his personal style. He had been an assistant secretary at Defense, so knew State and Foreign Service officers' roles well. Everyone was anxious to shine for the new management but comfortable that they knew the Department. There wasn't the layer of mistrust that comes with people without experience.

Q: There was talk today we are in the second day of the new Obama administration. So God knows what's going on.

KLOTH: There is always a certain tension until you get to know the new boss in any job - that tension is always there. But with new Republican Administrations it tends to be more severe because the Republicans as a group are more concerned about government, the size of government and the people working it, feeling they're not in tune with the philosophy of open markets and smaller government. They may well be right.



Q: So you were in the EB policy shop from when to when?

KLOTH: I was there from 2001 to 2003. I had only been there a couple of months when we were hit on 9/11. EB went into war mode with the war in Afghanistan, and the clear mandate for our assistant secretary was to develop the international economic support and intellectual framework plan - for Afghanistan's post-Taliban economic development. A special team was set up in EB to work with all the other agencies to do that.

Q: How did the war in Afghanistan hit you all in what you were up to?

KLOTH: In our shop some of our folks became part of the new team. I continued going around to economic seminars around town. I realized there was growing concern in the U.S. development community, international NGOs as well as among governments in the third world that U.S. aid for Afghanistan meant less assistance for others. The web is terrific for research. I could sample NGO, government and media websites all over the world. Pre-Internet I would probably have sent out a blizzard of cables seeking information, but I could web-surf around the globe from my desk. I wrote a paper alerting the assistant secretary of the need to address that concern. I don't know exactly where that fit into the thinking, but the Administration developed the Millennium Challenge Account, not only more money but also a new approach to get countries involved in needed reforms to qualify for more aid and ensure the aid had bigger impact.

In the run up to the assault on Iraq, EB put together an interagency group to prepare an economic plan to deal with post-Saddam Iraq. Our office was involved with supporting that effort too.

Q: But also was this part of a process? The State Department went through a great deal of planning for a post Saddam thing which was completely dismissed, I mean, I'm not sure if the term is right, but it seems to be right, by the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and his courtiers and Vice President Cheney which frankly lead to I'm not sure the State Department plan was the plan but certainly the thing was a disaster and it was a disaster because of poor planning.

KLOTH: Right. Our section was not involved as a unit, so I don't have an insider's knowledge of what happened or didn't happen in prior planning. EB certainly put good people on the issues. We certainly know now that our top national leadership ignored advice they didn't want to hear from a wide variety of people, apparently including the Secretary of State. Once the war started, EB, like everyone else, worked hard for success.



Q: To just touch on this as we are leading up to your involvement in Iraq personally as a Foreign Service officer looking at this, and I realize this, sort of on the personal side how did you and maybe some of your colleagues feel about the connection between Iraq and the terrorism attack?

KLOTH: I had plenty to do and wasn't pouring over the intel on that issue, so could only note the debate in the media and wonder about the Administration argument on the Al-Qaeda connection. On WMD, I thought that Saddam had or was trying to get nukes, chemical and bio weapons. I had people from my PM office who had gone to Iraq with the UN teams in the 1990s. They had seen his programs and the lengths he had gone to conceal them. Remember we only caught up with his bio-weapon program because his son-in-law defected. I will confess I did not question what I thought was the intel communities' evaluation that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction.

I could see the President was in an awful position. If weapons of mass destruction from Iraq were used in the U.S. or in Europe, then how would the president justify inaction. That said, I thought invading Iraq ill advised. I think Secretary Powell told the President that you break it, you bought it. I thought he could have continued: breaking it is a hell of a lot easier than fixing it. I couldn't imagine the American public would accept a steady stream of casualties for long either. I have always been leery of U.S. boots on the ground in as volatile area as the Middle East.

Q: You went from this policy area to where?

KLOTH: Then I went up to the Hill for a year to work as a Pearson Fellow.

Before we leave the policy office, I'd like to discuss my work with U.S. consumer groups. U.S. consumer groups felt that they had insufficient voice in U.S. foreign economic policy, although the European Bureau set up a U.S.-European consumer dialogue to parallel a U.S.-European business dialogue. The role of U.S. consumer groups, like that of other NGOs, will continue to grow in international policy, I think. The issue for consumer groups is that they have no easy place to plug in at State or most other agencies. EB's focus is business issues. A fundamental problem for our leadership was, as with all NGOs, who do they represent? How do you know how much weight to give the views of this organization or that, or even coalitions we helped but together such as the groups involved in the US-EU Consumer Dialogue?

Q: You know the role of NGOs, consumer groups, and all. It's always...



KLOTH: Consumer groups tend, understandably, to be focused on domestic agencies and the domestic political process. In the 1990s, they began to understand the impact of international economic policy on their issues. But they seem to have been slower in reaching out to State in the way business and unions had been for many decades. Basically we operate on the doctor theory. If you are sick, you call me. If I don't hear from you, I assume you're OK. Businesses call quick when they have a problem in a foreign country, so do human rights or environment NGOs.

Q: Okay, so we will pick this up next time on your Pearson year; that is 2004.

KLOTH: That is from 2003 to 2004. I worked as foreign policy advisor to New Hampshire Senator John Sununu, member of the Foreign Relations Committee and chair of its Foreign Operations Subcommittee. I'd gone to college in NH, and my mother lived there since I was in high school, so I knew something of the state which is why I think he signed me on. The Pearson program folks at State had urged me to find a slot with a Republican. A number of Democratic Senators took Pearson fellows year after year. I think their chiefs of staff saw the benefit and reached out to State's legislative office to keep them coming, but we didn't have much representation on the Republican side. I know Sununu's office brought on successor FSOs after I was there. But Sununu lost his seat in 2008.

Sununu was first elected in 2002, so I was the foreign policy guy in the office. I set up hearings for the Subcommittee and followed a host of issues, including Homeland Security issues because I had a security clearance others didn't. Sununu was the only Senator of Arab-American heritage, so I was exposed to the Middle East as never before. It was a great experience. We really should get more FSOs up there. A Senate staffer and former FSO once told me that FSOs know more about foreign legislatures than their own!

I was then Director of EB's Transportation Policy Office from 2004-2006. We handled air security, safety, environment problems, and maritime commercial and security issues, working closely with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and States' counterterrorism office. The issues were sensitive, so I'd prefer not to go into detail. The challenge was to develop internationally acceptable systems to deal with these problems, in the context of U.S. legislation which often required that our agencies act in ways that other countries considered intrusive. Our job was getting everyone focused on outcomes and developing mutually advantageous plans. DHS' biggest problem was juggling U.S. legislative requirements against foreign countries' own politics, laws and regulations

Following that, I volunteered to go to Iraq. I thought our invasion ill advised, but we had to find solutions to the mess.



I arrived in Baghdad in the summer of July 2006. I was deputy in the economic section. When I arrived, we were swapping out everybody at the end of their one-year tours. Continuity was an issue. I had been attending Iraq related meetings in the Department since January when I got the assignment which helped.

We had no FSNs to provide perspective either. It took me almost a year to hire an FSN in Baghdad because of the difficulty of background checks and finding someone willing to work for us. If found out, FSNs got killed. I found a terrific person in the end.

At any rate, I arrived in early July which gave me a few days overlap with my predecessor and over a month overlap with the out-going Minister Counselor, whose successor's schedule meant he arrived in August. That was important, and I got a pretty good idea of what the section had been doing and needed to do.

Not long after my arrival, the military command started a major effort to secure Baghdad. In many guerrilla wars, the guerrillas own the mountains and rural areas. In Iraq, the key struggle was for control of Baghdad. The fight in Anbar province was important too, but if a government cannot control its capital, it has had it. The effort in mid-2006 failed in Baghdad. The idea was to clear and hold a limited number of areas and then expand. The bad guys simply kept going in the rest of the city and then figured out how to get back into the areas we had "cleared."

A major part of my job was the section's principal liaison, meaning the one who went to a lot of meetings, with the military. I managed the day-in, day-out side of the section too, liaison with the Iraqi parliament, where I really missed not having the language, and personnel, plus, of course, backing up my very busy boss when he had to be two places at once. The Iraq leave package and out of town or country meetings meant that I was acting chief of section for almost three months, including for the critical time in December 2006, when the economic policy to support the surge was decided with the Iraqis. In the economic section our focus was on policy and the legal framework in Iraq. The Iraq Reconstruction and Management Office (IRMO) and USAID had the program money.

A key U.S. political and economic goal was to get the Iraqi government to pass a new Oil Law. My boss and our energy section - and the ambassador and DCM - spent a lot of time with top Iraqi, including and Kurdish, officials trying to hammer out a mutually acceptable new Oil Law. I also was involved in meetings on this subject in my boss' absence. The law was very contentious because of the politics between Baghdad and the Kurds in particular, although, given the importance of oil revenues to Iraq's economy, there were a lot of other players too. Our section also worked closely with the Iraqis to put together the International Compact with Iraq in which the Iraqi government and the donor nations agreed to economic reform in Iraq.



The economic section did not run projects per se. AID and IRMO, the Iraq Reconstruction and Management Organization, had the project funds. In general, people worked closely together. With emails and phone calls and digital video conferences at levels right up to the President and Prime Minister communication within the embassy and to Washington as well as with our military was continuous. Now and again I certainly wished we still had the old cable system that slowed things down. I remember at one point the Front Office told us to stop responding to email requests from DC because we were so busy. If you get a cable, we respond. If you get an email, send it to the FO staff, and it's on their head that you ignored it.

We got along pretty well with our military colleagues. The chief issue seemed to be that some had difficulty understanding, even in the States - look at our Katrina relief efforts - still not done, political processes move at their own pace. As far as economic issues went the fundamental issue was that you weren't going to have the kind of economic growth and development Iraq and Iraqis needed without security of state. Compared to a lot of countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq had a lot of advantages: capital from oil, although that was a curse too, since some Iraqis' vision of the future was just living off oil revenues. Iraq had human capital, in spite of a high illiteracy rate through the Diaspora community throughout the Gulf, Europe and the U.S. with many people highly educated and well versed in modern business. While the number of Iraqis who fled the violence was not small, I was always impressed by how many stayed. But who was going to invest very much in even a small shop, if you might be blown up or kidnapped for money or shot. All of us wished that change could come faster. Americans and Iraqis were getting killed. But I certainly cannot think of any country that has developed new and effective political and economic institutions overnight.

What is often lost sight of is that the so-called surge of 2007 was not successful because we simply brought in more U.S. troops, but because we had the right strategy. U.S. and Iraqi troops moved into Baghdad and set up camp, so they could protect people, their homes, schools and businesses. "Civilian" economic and political programs are fine but without security, they fail. Further, if there is security, locals start working to build their own businesses and political process. Assistance programs are a plus, but the local folks are the key.



The ambassador certainly and the country team worked very closely with the command. Ambassador Khalilzad and General Casey were making key decisions in 2006. The ambassador worked very hard on the political side trying to get the Sunni and Shia, and the various factions within those two groups, to work with each other in the central government. We also had provincial reconstruction teams, which I believe had started about April, 2006. A couple of friends of mine popped up as provincial reconstruction team leaders, and they would come into Baghdad periodically and gave me a chance to get some outside the capital insights. It was very difficult to move not for us outside of the Green Zone but for these PRTs to get out to "their" areas - to move outside of their particular compounds because of security. But I tried to expand my range of vision by talking with as many people, including the few FSNs in various other sections, as I could and with PRT folks from outside. I also met myself with parliamentarians and ministry officials. Was it the preferred way to do things, of course not. Was it better than not being in country at all? Certainly.

Q: What were PRTs supposed to be doing?

KLOTH: Well, the PRTs were to be in a sense the embassies' representatives in the provinces. They were to work with the provincial governments and with the embassy to help the Iraqi government build working relationships. That meant relationships that worked between the central government and the provincial governments. The provincial governments were being given new responsibilities they never under Saddam's top down, centrally controlled system. For example, the ministries had branch offices in the provinces. The line of chain of command was from the provincial department of education office to the central government's Ministry of Education. It was not through the provincial government as such under Saddam. The new system gave provincial governments authority, resources and responsibilities they never had before.

The PRTs were to try and help the Iraqis develop democratic political institutions and processes and new relationships with the central government. Budget issues were key. Everything from how do you set up a provincial budget to what documents do you need to send to the Finance Ministry to get funds released when you need them. Lack of security meant driving to Baghdad to do some networking might get you killed. That was a serious problem and made it hard to build new personal relationships or simply talk over a proposal for a new bridge.

Q: Obviously the "surge" action on our part and with the Iraqi troops was a key breakthrough in strategy, but was this also instigating it or was there movement...at a certain point guerilla stuff doesn't work or this sort of thing when the populace says screw this. Had they reached the screwing point or something?



KLOTH: Anbar Province was dominated by Sunnis who now found themselves out of power with a Shia dominated central government. Democracy meant that would continue, because Shias have a demographic majority in Iraq. Even in Sunni areas, boycotting the elections left Sunnis with governments skewed against them or against majority groups. Anbar was a hotbed for Al-Qaeda and for Sunni resistance to the new government and to U.S. forces. Things began to change in the fall of 2006 because the mid-level sheiks decided that the Al Qaeda operators in Anbar were not working in the Sunnis' best interest. Sunnis also realized that boycotting the earlier elections had been a mistake and that the Baghdad Shia-majority government wasn't going to go away in spite of the car bombs.

If I could pause too, I talked about the military preparations for the surge. So what is the embassy doing and what was the civilian role in all of this? In the summer when I arrived, there were a number of goals that had been identified on the civilian side, overall it was to encourage and push the Iraqis to start operating as political actors with each other in a democratic manner. But the Iraqi body politic had a lot of internal tensions.

There was deep animosity among many toward those who supported the Baath Party, people who worked for Saddam in the old government. There was tension between Sunni and Shia and within those groups. There was resentment against returnees by people who stayed and suffered under Saddam, including many in the bureaucracy who felt they had done their jobs to make things better rather than "just run away." And now the exiles came back and became ministers. For many Iraqis and Iraqi bureaucrats, that didn't seem right. This happens in many countries when a country is liberated or, if a colony, becomes independent. Returnees and many others think that those who were in government jobs were helping keep Saddam and his thugs in power by making the lights go on or the schools run.

Q: I watched this in Germany in the early '50s.

KLOTH: Exactly. By '06, there was a lot of resentment toward Americans too. We were still trying to tell Iraqis how to run their country, apparently oblivious to the mess "the U.S. had created," as one Iraqi put it to me. By '06, of course, "the Americans" had been running Iraq as far as most Iraqis were concerned for three years. The water didn't work; they couldn't go outside their house without taking their life in their hands; there was little electricity, and here we were still lecturing them on how to do things right.



I remember one American, a retired FSO who had been an ambassador, who entered right after the invasion, said when he arrived at a ministry, four of the director generals greeted him with a plan for revamping the ministry. He left soon after, but returned as part of our "civilian surge." After doing his introductory rounds, he told a group of us that he was struck most to discover that three years before, Iraqis were full of ideas for change, but now the people he had just met seemed so passive. "What happened here? What happened to that enthusiasm? I was told to come out and give the Iraqis a push to do this and that. Well, the Iraqi's didn't need to be pushed when I talked in three years ago but now I see this passivity? What have we done to them?"

Well, that's a good question without a simple answer, I'm sure. By '06 Iraqis had to be wondering how long is this present government going to last? How long are these Americans going to be here? It was clear by my arrival that there was a time limit, and it would be shorter rather than longer. What's coming next? Another thought in peoples' minds was: these Americans are always telling me how smart they are. Fine, let them do it. I'll do what I'm told to do, but I'm not coming forward with anything new. Finally, if you're a responsible Iraqi official and good custodian of Iraq's money and you know Americans will pay for something if you sit on your hands, what's the right thing for you to do? Let them do it and pay for it, of course.

I think we underestimate these kinds of political and psychological and economic disincentives that we create in all our hurry to "get results now." Results in some cases I bet we couldn't get out of our system and I'm thinking of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast how many years is it since Katrina? Our haste is understandable. Our soldiers are dying, but we often seem to be short of humility and realism.

So much more than once I heard first or second hand comments not just from former Iraqi government people but from Iraqi businessmen, educators, others: Why don't you just let us do this? We know how to rebuild a country; we did it after the Iran-Iraq war. So that was very frustrating. The basic problem was that the Iraqi political, social and economic dynamics were going to work themselves out one way or another but on their own timeline. The surge established the security, and Iraqis started to work again.

What was the U.S. civilian component going to do to support the surge. First, we would keep working with the Iraqi government to help them make it work. There were a couple of key political issues such as provincial elections and resolution of the problems of ethnic tensions in Kirkuk. Then there was on the economic side they need for a revised oil law, as much a political symbol as a needed reform to encourage foreign oil firms to invest. That's something that our section worked on very hard. We created new provincial reconstruction teams and imbedded them with our military units to provide our military colleagues with people who had expertise in things like politics, economics, reconstruction and assistance.



The White House wanted the Iraqi government to put spend its money in a surge of civilian projects, new housing, that sort of thing. The Iraqis, had a quarter of their budget marked for investment in capital projects, about \$10 billion. They pledged to get those projects going. The Iraqis told us that long-term projects would give Iraqis the confidence and the resources they needed to get things moving. One official said: short-term projects get short term results, not lasting results.

We did throw in some extra funding, as I recall, from U.S. government programs, and did reorient some of the U.S. government programs to be more directly available for things that the PRTs on the ground could identify as an immediate need. But the bottom line was that if this new military strategy could not bring security, none of the civilian programs - American or Iraqi - would get off the ground.

Q: When you left in the summer of '07, what did you think? Wither Iraq?

KLOTH: I thought that finally we had a security plan that was making progress, that intellectually was the right one. In the end we had to keep people safe. The insurgents understand that because the car bombs or roadside bombs or attacks on markets or mosques have one simple message: We can kill you and neither the government nor the Americans can protect you or your children, so we're going to take over.

I was amazed at how many Iraqis just kept going, in spite of the violence. They maybe walked their kids to school when before the kids went on their own, but then Dad or Mom came to work or opened their shops. But the insurgents were trying to find the tipping point with bombs and guns.

Q: Well, it's the thing I too noticed when I was in Vietnam that we tended to work a six-day week. I mean things had settled down and long hours and holidays. We didn't shut down the consular section we'd have going, but our local employees left first. I thought about this and thought, hell, why are we doing this, and then I realized they'd been doing this war more than twenty years, and we were doing it 18 months at a time, our war was 18 months and their war was twenty years. Of course, they were pacing themselves.

KLOTH: Right, that's their life. When you read about war as long periods of boredom and then seconds of terror, in the end most of my time is get up, eat breakfast, check my emails, whatever it is you do as your regular routine, and it's just schlepping around and then suddenly you hear the thuds of a rocket attack. There were a number of rockets that hit the embassy when I was there, a number close to my office. That wakes you up. Another point in thinking about troop casualties' going up is that to the extent that bad guys under pressure are going to punch back. When our troops are more aggressive, casualties will go up.



But day in and day out you don't think about those, you do your job. I guess that was your Vietnam experience. But we had a lot more protection than Iraqis. When I was briefing my new FSN on the duck and cover procedures, I was trying not to be alarming. But my new employee reminded me: "Mr. Kloth, it's all right. Don't forget where I live. I know about these. But I appreciate your telling me what we do inside the embassy."

Q: You left there and came back. Very briefly what have you been up to?

KLOTH: Okay, I retired as an active duty Foreign Service in September '07. The East Asia Pacific bureau asked me if I could come in and fill in a gap they had, because their new Congressional liaison officer wasn't coming from Afghanistan for six months. They brought me back as a WAE, When Actually Employed, a temporary employee. When the new officer arrived, EAP asked me to continue and work with the Coast Guard to implement a maritime environment protection program in the Malacca and Singapore Straits. I reached my pay yearly cap and left in September 2008.

End of interview